

# CIVILIZATION AND LIBERTY

*By the same Author*

THE BRITISH EMPIRE  
SHORT HISTORY OF THE  
BRITISH COMMONWEALTH (2V.)  
THE EXPANSION OF EUROPE  
THE MAKING OF BRITISH INDIA  
HOW BRITAIN IS GOVERNED  
FUTURE FOR DEMOCRACY  
NATIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES

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# CIVILIZATION AND LIBERTY

*by*

RAMSAY MUIR



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# CONTENTS

	PREFATORY LETTER	9
I	PRIMITIVE SOCIETY AND THE EARLY CIVILIZATIONS	15
	§ 1 Primitive Society	15
	§ 2 The Emergence of Civilization	18
II	THE SEMINAL IDEAS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION	26
	§ 1 The Birth of Freedom in Greece	26
	§ 2 Rome and the Reign of Law	31
	§ 3 Christianity and the Worth of Human Personality	37
III	THE MIDDLE AGES	41
	§ 1 The Gradual Disappearance of Slavery	41
	§ 2 The Services of the Church to Civilization and to Liberty	45
	§ 3 Political Development in the Middle Ages	50
	§ 4 The Emergence of the National State	58
IV	THE FOUR GREAT CIVILIZATIONS	63
	§ 1 The Chinese Civilization	63
	§ 2 The Indian Civilization	66
	§ 3 The Islamic Civilization	69
	§ 4 The European Civilization	71
V	CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START, 1450-1550	72
	§ 1 The Great Transition	72
	§ 2 The Decay of Medievalism and the Rise of National Monarchies	73
	§ 3 The Emergence of the Middle Class	77
	§ 4 The Renaissance	81
	§ 5 The Protestant Reformation	86
	§ 6 The Unveiling of the World	91

# CONTENTS

VI	AN ERA OF CONFUSION, 1550-1660	95
	§ 1 Spanish Despotism and its Consequences	95
	§ 2 A Ferment of Political Thought	99
	§ 3 The Results of Freedom in Holland	106
	§ 4 The Ruin of Germany	109
	§ 5 The Puritan Revolution in England	111
	§ 6 The New World	118
VII	ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM VERSUS LIBERTY, 1660-1763	122
	§ 1 Despotism at its Apogee	122
	§ 2 The Development of Political Liberty in England	126
	§ 3 An Interval of Peace	133
	§ 4 The Victory of Freedom in America	137
VIII	THE ERA OF REVOLUTION — A. INDUSTRIALISM AND HUMANITARIANISM	141
	§ 1 A Many-sided Revolution	141
	§ 2 Economic Change	142
	§ 3 Humanitarianism	147
IX	THE ERA OF REVOLUTION — B. THE INTOXICATING DOCTRINE OF LIBERTY	154
	§ 1 A Revolution in Ideas	154
	§ 2 The American Revolution	161
	§ 3 The French Revolution	166
X	EUROPE AND THE NON-EUROPEAN WORLD	174
	§ 1 The Collapse of Empires	174
	§ 2 The United States : Land of Freedom	176
	§ 3 Political Liberty in the Second British Empire	181
	§ 4 The More Backward Regions	187
	§ 5 The Indian Empire	189

# CONTENTS

XI	THE AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION IN EUROPE, 1815-1850	195
	§ 1 A Period of Repression	195
	§ 2 A Series of Revolutions	199
	§ 3 Sober Progress in Britain	205
XII	THE APPARENT TRIUMPH OF THE SYSTEM OF LIBERTY, 1850-1880	213
	§ 1 Nationalist Wars and Parliaments	213
	§ 2 Typical Systems of Government	220
	(a) Russia, (b) Austro-Hungary, (c) Germany, (d) Italy, (e) France, (f) Switzerland, (g) Britain	
	§ 3 The Working of Democracy	231
XIII	DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL, 1880-1914	235
	§ 1 International Unrest	235
	§ 2 Science and the Second Industrial Revolution	242
	§ 3 Social Aspirations	246
	§ 4 The Danish Democracy	250
XIV	THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL, 1914-1939	254
	§ 1 The War and New World-Order	254
	§ 2 Blunders of the Peace-Makers	259
	§ 3 Causes of Failure of the New Order	264
	§ 4 Totalitarianism <i>versus</i> Democracy	269
	INDEX	285



## PREFATORY LETTER,

TO SIR ERNEST SIMON

MY DEAR SIMON,

Here is the book which you have long been urging me to write. For what it is worth, I offer it to you as a token of our long friendship.

How often we have discussed its subject! We have agreed that Liberty is the vitamin of Civilization. We have recognized the gravity of the threat to Liberty which arises not only from the Nazi horror, but also from many features of our present ways of life. We have dreamt of, and planned for, a future in which Liberty shall be more real for all, and its foundations shall be laid securely in peace and economic justice. We have reminded ourselves by what slow and difficult stages even the imperfect but precious Liberty we now enjoy has been attained, and how easily it can (as in Germany) be lost. We have deplored the apparent indifference of most of our fellow-citizens, who take for granted the freedom they possess, as they take for granted the air they breathe.

We have agreed that a book is needed on this subject, a book which does not yet exist. You have insisted that it was my duty to try to write this book: I, remembering how the great Lord Acton devoted his life to the accumulation of knowledge on the subject and died without writing his book, have hesitated about daring to attack so august a theme.

But the book that is wanted need not be — indeed, ought not to be — a work of great learning. It ought to be short, simple and direct, appealing to the ordinary reader rather than to the scholar. Nor ought it to be a theoretical treatise, like Mill's great little book. It ought to take its readers on a

## PREFATORY LETTER

swift reconnaissance flight over the centuries, and be a blend of history with political thought. It need not contain any facts that any well-read man does not already know; but it should give to these facts a new significance in the light of a great theme.

Well, that is the book I have tried to write; and nobody knows better than I do how imperfectly the work has been done. Some day, no doubt, somebody will do it better. But in the meantime an attempt has to be made. So here it is; and I hope it may be of some use.

Always yours,  
RAMSAY MUIR

Buxton  
*April 1940*



# CIVILIZATION AND LIBERTY



## DEFINITIONS

*for the purposes of this Book*

By 'Civilization' I mean, not merely mechanical improvements, and greater speed and comfort of living; but a form of social organization in which men and women, thrown into close relations, are enabled by their diverse gifts to enrich and enlarge one another's lives.

By 'Liberty' I mean the secure enjoyment by individuals, and by natural or spontaneous groups of individuals (such as nations, churches, trade unions), of the power to think their own thoughts, and to express and act upon them, using their own gifts in their own way under the shelter of Law, provided that they do not impair the corresponding rights of others.



## CHAPTER I

# PRIMITIVE SOCIETY AND THE EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

### § I PRIMITIVE SOCIETY

MAN has probably existed on the earth for something like half a million years; but it has only been in the last ten thousand years, at most, that he has begun to approach to something that can be called 'civilization'. If we imagine the history of mankind compressed into a single year, it would be only in the last week of the year that he got himself into those more highly organized groups which made some sort of civilization possible.

Yet from the beginning he has always been a member of some society, however primitive; for it is part of the definition of man that he is a social animal. Only in society can he develop the art of speech, and therefore of coherent thought, which distinguishes him from other animals. Only in society can he practise co-operation through the division of labour, whereby he has been enabled gradually to make himself the master of his environment. Only in society can he find shelter for his prolonged adolescence, wherein he learns from his predecessors something of their accumulated experience, and is able to pass it on to be enlarged and enriched. Man, since he became Man, has always been a 'social animal', whose life depended upon, and whose thoughts and outlook were shaped by, the society of which he was a member.

So great is the domination of society over the individual that in primitive societies the individual scarcely exists. He is almost as completely subjected to his horde or his tribe as the bees or the ants. Almost, but not quite; and it is this 'almost'

## EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

that has saved him from the sterile fate of the bees and the ants, which go on without change or progress following the same instinct-controlled existence century after century.

The limitations upon the individuality of a member of primitive society are very strict. His rights and duties, his actions, his very thoughts, are determined by unvarying customs and *tabus* which he never breaks, or thinks of breaking. But he can find some expression for his personality through greater cunning or valour in the chase or in war, or through artistic skill in the moulding of pottery, or in the portrayal of animals on the walls of his cave, or through a knack of 'constructing tribal lays' for his fellows to chant, or through deftness in the flaking of flint implements. Every advance made by primitive man was due to the inventive-ness of some individual who had sufficient freedom from the eternal slavery of bees and ants to work out his own idea. Some dim figure of the remote past first conceived the notion of hollowing out a trunk wherewith to cross a river; another was the first to tame and domesticate animals; another first discovered the possibility of smelting metal-bearing ores; another revolutionized transport by inventing the wheel. Despite the rigidity of primitive society, there is always in exceptional men some spark of individuality. When it is given its chance, however imperfectly, progress begins. This has been Man's salvation, the secret of his slow and toilsome escape from the mire of animalism.

The reason why progress was so slow as to be almost imperceptible during the greater part of Man's long history was that primitive society exercised what may be called a 'totalitarian' control over the minds and bodies of its members. Every return towards this sort of 'totalitarian' control is a relapse towards the primitive and barbaric.

Because they are 'totalitarian' and repressive of individuality, primitive societies are necessarily stagnant and unprogressive. They become encased in a hard shell of

## PRIMITIVE SOCIETY

unalterable custom which it is almost impossible to break. Only a very few among the innumerable human societies that have existed on the face of the earth have been able to escape by their own efforts from primitive barbarism. Most of them have been rescued from that condition by being brought into contact — usually warlike contact — with societies that had, for some reason, been able to make the effort. Thus the men who had learnt to use bronze conquered and enslaved the men of the Stone Age, and shook them out of their set habits; and, in their turn, the men who had learnt to use iron did the same service (at the cost of much slaughter) to the men of the Bronze Age.

Progress, indeed, is only possible when men — or at any rate exceptional men — are free to think their own thoughts and to make full use of their own powers; for the impulse to progress always comes from individuals. Even in highly developed societies, the adventurous mind which rejects the accepted ideas of the majority has to face many obstacles. But when the general opinion of a society not only permits but ordains that all originality, all adventurousness of mind, all challenges to received notions shall be forbidden, and that those who are guilty of these crimes shall be destroyed, progress becomes impossible.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the advance of Man through the major part of his history has been very slow. The surprising thing is that the hard crust of custom should ever have been broken at all. But once it is effectually broken, as the story we have to tell will show, progress becomes relatively rapid.

The history of human progress is, in truth, the history of the gradual emancipation of individuality or personality from the shackles by which its creative power was restrained. But the emancipation of individuality is the same thing as the growth of liberty. Even a glance at the most primitive ages thus discloses that there is an organic relationship

## EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

between the growth of liberty and the development of civilization. It is this organic relationship which we shall try to bring out in the following pages, as it was displayed in the successive eras of history.

### §2 THE EMERGENCE OF CIVILIZATION

The first great advance which Man made in his long pilgrimage was the advance which was made by some of his societies from primitive barbarism to something that can be called 'civilization'. How did this advance take place?

The derivation of the word 'civilization' suggests that it was when he began to build cities. In some sense 'civilization' means 'cityfication' — it means the kind of life that is lived in cities, where men are thrown into close contact with one another, and are therefore compelled to work out the rules and the ways of life that can make this close contact, and the mutual dependence which it involves, tolerable and beneficial. They could not adjust themselves to these new conditions of life without consciously modifying the rigid customs which had previously governed their lives; and they could not do this without enlarging their liberty.

The identification of civilization with cities is borne out by the historical facts. During the last century our ideas about the origins of civilization have been transformed by great excavations in Egypt, in Sumer, in Mycenaean Greece, in Assyria, in Palestine, in India, and even in Central America. All these excavations tell the same story: they reveal to us buried cities, stratum below stratum, which were the nurseries of civilized life.

The most ancient and most lasting of these early civilizations had their origins in alluvial river-valleys — the Nile, the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Hwang-ho, the Indus. In these river-valleys cultivation was easy, and wealth was



## THE EMERGENCE OF CIVILIZATION

readily produced. But it was not in the rural areas where this basic wealth was produced that these early peoples created the arts and crafts in which their achievements were so remarkable, or invented writing and preserved records, or laid the foundations of mathematical, astronomical and other sciences. These fruits of civilization were reaped in the numerous cities wherein the wealth of the surrounding countryside was accumulated, and the means existed to maintain artists, craftsmen and scholars.

The city's fortified walls gave security to those who dwelt within them, and security is one of the foundations of liberty. The splendid temples of the city's gods and the palace of its king fostered skill in architecture and the decorative arts. The temples were the centres of the city's life, and their priests formed a leisured, learned, professional class among whom the art of writing and the rudiments of scientific knowledge came to birth. Among the city-dwellers, now largely divorced from rural life, specialization of functions and the division of labour grew apace: they must have been well developed before the wonderful art-work found in the tombs of Egypt and of Sumer could have been produced. Above all, city life necessitated more elaborate laws and courts of justice than had been needed in the custom-governed tribal life; and conscious, deliberate law-making, which involved the first break in the hard crust of custom, had to be undertaken. 'Civility' and 'urbanity' grew, especially among the relatively wealthy and leisured classes which city life created. In short, what we call 'civilization' was born and nurtured in the life of cities.

In the early stages, however, the development of these new ways of life gave rise to — or were, at any rate, accompanied by — four things which we have come to regard as incompatible with any high form of civilization, but which were perhaps essential to its early development. These four things were despotism, priestcraft, war, and slavery, the four

## EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

greatest enemies of liberty, which had to be overcome ere liberty could thrive.

*Despotism.* Almost all the ancient cities which archaeological research has revealed to us seem to have been ruled by absolute monarchs, wielding the powers of life and death. The persons of these monarchs were usually sacred, because they were regarded as the spokesmen and mouthpieces, and often even as the incarnations, of the city's god or gods.

There was but one group of exceptions, in the ancient cities of which we have knowledge, to this general rule. In Mycenaean Greece, as it is described by Homer, the absolute authority of the king was qualified by a council of chieftains, and by an assembly of the host who clashed their arms in token of assent. This usage existed also among the primitive Teutons before they took to city life, and it was probably a general usage among the Indo-European peoples. It may have existed also among other peoples before they took to city life; but it apparently survived the process of 'cityfication' only in Mycenaean Greece and perhaps in Italy. In all the cities of the Near East, which were the cradles of civilization, despotism seems to have been universal.

Perhaps only the authority of a king who was regarded as the very mouthpiece and embodiment of the god could have reconciled peoples who held their ancient customs to be of divine origin to the great changes in these customs which a civilized way of life made necessary. In any case, kings were the great law-makers, the revisers and constructors of codes. The famous code of Hammurabi, who was contemporary with Abraham, represented a comparatively late stage in this process. And because they were law-makers, the despots of the ancient cities were in a sense the initiators of liberty, since, in framing their laws, they broke away from the unchanging customs and *tabus* by which primitive peoples are enchained. The first step forwards to liberty is the deliberate making of laws suggested by reason, to take the

## THE EMERGENCE OF CIVILIZATION

place of immemorial usages that were regarded as sacred merely because they were ancestral and ultimately came from the gods.

*Priestcraft.* In oriental countries, the only power that limited or qualified the authority of the despot was the power of the priesthood; for the priests also could claim to be the mouthpieces of the gods. Their influence was always powerful; and in some cases they reduced the king to insignificance. We can see this coming about, for example, in ancient Egypt, until it reached its culmination after the XVIIth dynasty.

Among the Jews, after the exile, the priests replaced the king altogether, and established at Jerusalem a theocracy of which they were the mouthpieces. Wherever priestcraft established itself, decadence and stagnation were apt to follow; for the priests strove to maintain a rigid and intolerant orthodoxy, and the development of law was almost limited to ritual codes. Among the Jews, indeed, these results were partly averted by the teaching of the Prophets, between whom and the priests there was constant conflict. It was the Prophets who turned Judaism into a living and potent faith, the forerunner of Christianity. If the priests had been left to themselves, they would have turned it into a dead thing.

In regard to priestcraft, as in regard to kingship, the cities of Greece and Italy offered an exception: in them priestcraft was never powerful. The heads of families in Rome administered their own religious rites, and the *pontifex maximus* was a city official. There were, indeed, priests in Homer, but they were of small importance, and there was no priestly caste. Agamemnon and his chieftains dealt directly with their gods; and although they claimed to be descendants of gods, they never claimed to be their sole mouthpieces. The absence of priestcraft and despotism in Greece may help to explain why it was that Greece was the

## EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

land in which the conception first emerged that Law was not the unalterable edict of the gods or of a despot, to be obeyed because of the gods' or the despot's unchallengeable authority; but that it could be, and ought to be, altered and improved by men in accordance with the dictates of their reason.

*War.* A despot who is in control of all the resources of his subjects is inevitably tempted to expand his power by force. On the other hand, the spectacle of peoples growing in wealth and civilization, and of cities that offer rich plunder, as inevitably arouses the cupidity of more backward peoples. For these reasons War has been a constant feature of the history of civilization.

Not only that, but it has been an essential means to the progress of civilization. This may sound a hard saying to a generation which has learnt to regard war as a wholly evil and destructive thing. It is now an evil and destructive thing, because civilization has outgrown the need for it; but it was not always so. As the world was, there was no other means whereby petty States and cities could have been brought together, to their own advantage, in larger units. War has been the principal method by which, in actual fact, the range and influence of civilization have been extended, whether through the domination of the more advanced peoples over the less advanced, or through the conquest and assimilation of the more advanced by the less advanced. To take a single example, the foundations of western civilization were laid by the wars of the Romans, which made the thought of Greece, the laws of Rome and the religion of Christianity, the common heritage of the West.

It was through war that the city civilizations of the Near East were built up into huge military empires — Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia. But although these huge empires were little more than tribute-collecting organizations, they did bring their subjects together, and give them a real degree

## THE EMERGENCE OF CIVILIZATION

of security, under whose shelter civilization could develop up to a certain point. Beyond this unity and security, they gave to their subjects little of the blessings of liberty; and for that reason stagnation befell the lands that were subject to them. Nevertheless, the wars of the great empires were probably less destructive than those of the little States they displaced had been.

War, then, has accompanied every stage in the growth of civilization, as inseparable from it as a shadow from the object which throws it. It has inflicted upon humanity an immeasurable volume of suffering; but through this suffering some good results have come which would not have come without it; and civilization has been fostered by the conflict and blending of many peoples.

As civilization has advanced, war has become more terrible, and has ceased to yield any useful results to balance the destruction it causes. Like slavery, which was its product, it has become an anachronism; and, now that the whole human race has been brought within a single political and a single economic system, and has become interdependent, war must be abolished if it is not to destroy the civilization which, in earlier stages, it helped to foster and extend.

*Slavery.* Like war, of which (as we have said) it is a product, Slavery has been, until a very recent date, an invariable concomitant of civilization. Slaves were among the most valuable plunder that resulted from the wars of early cities and empires. Without their unpaid and forced labour, the magnificent monuments which win the admiration of archaeologists could not have been created.

The paradox can even be maintained that the institution of slavery made the growth of liberty possible, by emancipating the master-class from drudgery, and leaving them free to pursue their own interests, and to develop their own powers. The noble and beautiful free civilization of Athens itself was only made possible by the existence of a large slave-

## EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

population. Slavery seemed, indeed, so essential a foundation for civilization that the enlightened philosopher Aristotle was constrained to invent a justification for it, arguing that most men are 'slaves by nature'.

Throughout the history of the ancient world, when the foundations of civilization were being laid, probably a majority of men and women, in the civilized States, were slaves: the foundations of our civilization have been cemented by the blood and tears of suffering millions. Yet it is probable that most of the slaves, like their masters, regarded slavery as a natural institution; probable also that most of them were treated with a reasonable degree of kindness, as members of the households which they served. It was not until the days of Rome's splendour and decadence, when armies of wretched slaves were herded like cattle in *ergastula*, when slaves were trained to slaughter one another for the entertainment of the circus, and when thousands of rebellious slaves were crucified by the roadsides, that the full horror and iniquity of slavery, and the moral degradation to which it condemned both slave and master, were fully revealed.

Whatever may be said in explanation or palliation of ancient slavery, it was a vitiating force, a negation of the dignity of manhood, and a principal cause of the inner decay of the ancient world.

A civilization that depended upon despotism, priestcraft, war and slavery was doomed to stagnation; and this was what befell the eastern empires. But meanwhile, in the West, three seminal ideas had been planted that were to give vitality to western civilization, and ultimately to win for it the leadership of the world. These three seminal ideas were contributed by three Mediterranean peoples, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. To the Greeks we owe the ideal of a free society, and the establishment of intellectual liberty; to the Romans the principle of the Reign of Law, and the creation of a sense of the unity of western civilization; to the

## THE EMERGENCE OF CIVILIZATION

Jews the foundation of a religion which became the common faith and inspiration of all the West, and which proclaimed the equal value of all men in the sight of God.

We must next turn to consider the birth and development of these three seminal ideas.

## CHAPTER II

# THE SEMINAL IDEAS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

### § I THE BIRTH OF FREEDOM IN GREECE

A NEW era in the history of civilization began when the Greeks entered upon the great experiment of political and intellectual liberty. As we have seen, they had never known despotism, or submitted to priestcraft. It is true that most of the Greek cities passed through a phase of dictatorship, which they called 'tyranny'; but this was mostly due to the temporary confusions which arose from reconstruction, and it never lasted long. Nearly all the Greek States framed their own constitutions, oligarchical or democratic; and in doing so shook themselves largely free from the dominance of unchanging custom.

As in other lands, the beginnings of civilization came with the foundation of cities, in which the inhabitants of neighbouring villages were gathered together for mutual protection. From their cities they gained not only security but the stimulus of close association and discussion; not only 'life', as Aristotle put it, but the possibility of enjoying 'the good life'. The Greeks valued these boons so highly that their 'city patriotism' became a passion. No sacrifice was too great to preserve the freedom of the city; for its sake they not only fought desperately against so great a power as Persia, they were unwilling even to merge their cities in the wider patriotism of the nation. That was why the great age of Greece lasted so short a time. The life of the city was far more intense than the life of a wider unity could be. In Athens pre-eminently, but not in Athens alone, it brought



## THE BIRTH OF FREEDOM IN GREECE

about in a short period an efflorescence of thought, of poetry and of art more wonderful than great nations could produce in long eras. But perhaps because it was so intense, it burnt itself out the more quickly. Never has there been given so potent an illustration of the vivifying power of liberty.

The earliest flowering of the Greek genius took place in the Greek cities on the western coast of Asia Minor. They, and with them some of the little cities of Greece proper, sent out bands of settlers between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C., to found new free cities on the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmora, on the shores of Thrace and Macedonia, in Sicily and southern Italy, and even on the distant coasts of Gaul and Spain. Among the causes of this amazing outpouring, which, long before the great days of Greece, made her influence felt throughout the Mediterranean world, was the desire to escape from the pressure of tyrannies and oligarchies, and to seek freedom in new lands: already the urge towards freedom was at work. Meanwhile, in the Asian cities, and especially in Miletus, intellectual liberty was born. The history of European science and philosophy begins with the bold speculations of Thales and other thinkers of Miletus, and of Pythagoras from the new Greece of the West. Before the Persian War, which was the beginning of the great age of Greece, a ferment of free thinking was already at work in the Greek cities, such as had never existed in the world before.

Athens, which was to be the chief home of the Greek civilization, had been, before the Persian wars, a city of minor importance. But in 493 B.C., shortly before the first Persian invasion, she had been endowed by Cleisthenes with a democratic constitution. The spirit of freedom, the sense that their city was their own, so wrought upon the minds of the citizens that, like her tutelary goddess Athena, who sprang full-grown from the brain of Zeus, Athens at once sprang into the front rank of Greek States. The heroic part

## SEMINAL IDEAS OF CIVILIZATION

which she played in the defeat of the Persians at Marathon and Salamis was due to this inspiration. She emerged as a great naval power; she pursued her advantage over the Persians, destroying their prestige; she brought all the islands of the Aegean, and the cities of the Asian and Thracian coasts, into a confederation which dominated the eastern Mediterranean, and secured the freedom of all its members. At a bound she had become the greatest power in Greece.

Far more important, her citizens, in the exhilaration of freedom, produced, during the fifth century B.C., such a galaxy of great statesmen, warriors, poets, dramatists, architects, sculptors and historians as no country, however large, has produced in a like period of time. There has never, in all history, been a parallel to the fullness of life which the Athenians enjoyed in the age of Pericles; and it was liberty — not only full participation in the control of their own affairs, but freedom of discussion and close contact with great minds — which made this glory possible. Thanks to her freedom, Athens had suddenly become the very hearth and home of the Greek genius.

Unhappily Athens did not know how to use the ascendancy she had won. She might have made herself the leader and centre of a union in freedom of all the Greek cities. In the intoxication of success she preferred to play the part of a tyrant-city, reducing her allies to the status of vassals or of subjects. It is not fanciful to say that this was the outcome of that contempt for the rights of others which slavery induces. Slavery thus vitiated and ultimately destroyed the noblest experiment in freedom that the world had ever seen. Athens found herself involved in long wars with a confederacy of states under the lead of Sparta. Betrayed by the insolence of success, she embarked upon the fatal Sicilian expedition, which brought about her downfall less than seventy years after the victory of Salamis that had begun her fame. Her

## THE BIRTH OF FREEDOM IN GREECE

allies deserted her; she lost the mastery of the seas; even her sacred citadel, the Acropolis, glorified by the noble works of Pheidias and Ictinus, was occupied by her unimaginative Spartan foes; and for a time she was forced to abandon the democratic freedom which had been the source of all her power and brilliance.

The political power of Athens was thus very shortlived. It was only for about half a century that she was the leading power in Greece. But although she was never again to have the chance of leading the Hellenic world in politics, the passion for freedom was too deeply rooted among her citizens to be destroyed. She regained her democratic system, and retained it through many vicissitudes, even when first Macedon and later Rome became the master of Greece. Demosthenes, the greatest orator of the ancient world, and perhaps the greatest of all time, in speeches that swayed the Athenian democracy, kept the flag of freedom flying in face of the growing power of Macedon; and Philip, Alexander the Great, and their successors respected her freedom because they venerated its products in the realms of thought and art.

For, though she had lost her empire, the free city of Athens retained and even enhanced the greater empire of the mind. Socrates, the true father of fearless thought in the philosophic sphere, the prophet who taught that truth must be followed without regard to consequences, was carrying on his teaching in the years when the Athenian Empire was collapsing, and suffered his martyrdom for truth during the reaction that followed this collapse. In the next generation Plato and Aristotle carried on in free Athens the great schools which diffused their profound thought over the Mediterranean world, and published the great writings which are still read and cherished by all who value the life of the spirit. After them thinkers, less profound perhaps, but even more influential, such as Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, and his rival Epicurus, kept the torch of free and searching thought alive,

## SEMINAL IDEAS OF CIVILIZATION

and gave to their philosophies something of the quality of religions. Zeno and the Stoics, in particular, sowed a seed that was to have noble fruits when they taught that all men were by nature free and equal. They did not succeed, indeed they scarcely tried, to wage war against the institution of slavery, upon which the civilization of the ancient world still rested. But their thinking embedded in the western world an ideal which was never extinguished, and which found its expression even in the codes of Roman law. Though she had lost her material empire, Athens had become, thanks to her freedom, the teacher and inspirer of the ancient world, and indeed of western civilization.

The supreme gift of Greece to the world — a gift due mainly, though not wholly, to Athens — was that she created the ideal of liberty, and displayed, by her own achievements, its infinite creative potency. Breaking the shackles of custom, Greece made every kind of experiment in shaping laws and institutions so as to serve the needs of men; she invented democracy, she invented representation (though she never carried it far, because she felt that every citizen must participate in a true democracy), she invented federalism, though too late to make it the means of unity. And, under the shelter of free institutions and rational laws, she was the founder of intellectual liberty.

The Greeks were the supreme Humanists. They rejoiced, without shame, in the beauty and strength of the human body, and gloried in the powers of the human mind. They gave birth to the spirit of free criticism, and were ready to follow the guidance of reason fearlessly, whithersoever it might lead. This was their true greatness; and when, after many centuries, a revival of independent thinking began in Europe, it was the rediscovery of the Greek achievement that stimulated it. The citizens of the small city of Athens — never more numerous than 50,000 at most — which most fully attained this liberty, enjoyed such a fullness of life as has

## ROME AND THE REIGN OF LAW

never been enjoyed before or since — a fullness of life that came, not from luxury or the abundance of material things, but from the tingling aliveness of men's minds.

Although the great age of Greece and of Athens lasted but a short time, its influence survived. Alexander of Macedon, that marvellous conqueror, owed his conquests to the military genius of the Greeks whom he led; and over all his wide empire, from the Bosphorus to the Indus, he planted Greek cities, endowed with self-governing rights and enjoying a real freedom, whence the civilization of Greece was spread over the eastern world. Alexander formed the high ideal of bringing Greeks and barbarians to live together and to share their gifts. It was, perhaps, an unrealizable ideal; at any rate, it was a premature ideal; and it weakened the intense life of the Greek cities by spreading it too widely. But the Hellenistic Age, which began with Alexander, was a great age. It extended over the eastern Mediterranean, and in a large degree over the western Mediterranean also, a common view of life, a common body of thought, and an inter-spersion of various religious ideas, which paved the way for Christianity and in many ways influenced its development. Even in the darkest ages, the influence of Greek thought was never wholly extinguished; it survived in some degree in the teaching of the Christian Fathers, in the Canons of the Church, and even in the codes of the Roman lawyers. The Greeks were the founders of western civilization. From them sprang the ideals of political and intellectual liberty which have been the secrets of its vitality and of its progress.

### § 2 ROME AND THE REIGN OF LAW

The Romans had nothing of the imaginative insight, the artistic genius, the intellectual power or the capacity for idealism of the Greeks. But they had a fund of practical common sense, and a steadfastness of purpose, such as the

## SEMINAL IDEAS OF CIVILIZATION

Greeks never displayed; and it was these qualities which enabled them to make their distinctive contribution to the building of western civilization.

They were able to do something which neither Athens nor Sparta nor Thebes ever succeeded in doing. They did not merely conquer the little city states and tribes of the Italian peninsula; they welded them all into a real unity, inspired by a common patriotism which was strong enough to resist even the military genius of the Carthaginian Hannibal, when he invaded Italy and inflicted defeat after defeat upon the Roman armies. The secret of their success was that they left to their allies a high degree of self-governing rights, and shared with many of them, and ultimately with all of them, the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship. Their power being thus solidly founded upon liberty, they were able to overthrow the might of Carthage, and to make themselves masters of the western Mediterranean, of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, of Spain and Northern Africa; and, being now the greatest power of the Mediterranean world, they next proceeded to win dominion over the eastern lands, where the conquests of Alexander had prepared the way for them. Greece and the Balkan peninsula, Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt fell under their sway. They bound these wide lands together by great roads and by efficient government; they swept piracy from the seas; they turned all the Mediterranean lands, and soon also Gaul, Western Germany and Britain, the greater part of the Danube valley, and (for a time) Mesopotamia, into a single vast empire whose boundaries were coterminous with those of western civilization.

This great empire could not be governed by the normal methods of the city-state — by an assembly of all citizens meeting in a single place. The forms of democracy were, indeed, long preserved; but the reality of power fell into the hands of the senate, an assembly of aristocrats who were tempted to abuse their vast powers. In the end, after a

## ROME AND THE REIGN OF LAW

century of civil strife, the controlling power fell into the hands of a single prince, the emperor, who wielded supreme military power and controlled the frontier provinces in which the legions were stationed, leaving the peaceful inner provinces to the control of the senate. But still the emperor in theory derived his power from election by the people, although in practice the army had the deciding voice. And still, in all parts of the empire, local self-government was enjoyed by the innumerable cities, and there was a great variety of forms of government.

So long as this system survived — so long, that is to say, as a real element of political liberty continued — the empire thrived, and gave peace and settled order to the civilized world. Over its wide expanse the civilization of Greece was spread, the Stoic and the Epicurean philosophies deeply influenced the educated classes, and science, letters and the arts thrived, though they had lost the originality of the great age of Greece.

Rome, having never submitted to priestcraft, or shown any signs of religious enthusiasm, came to be extremely tolerant of various forms of religious belief, so long as they did not threaten the stability of the empire. The cults of the East which gave some clues to the mysteries of life and death — the cult of Mithras, which came from Persia, the cult of Isis and Osiris which came from Egypt, the mystery faiths of Dionysus and Cybele — were spread abroad throughout the empire. Judaism also was widely extended, and in its early days the astonishing growth of Christianity was not impeded, until, by challenging the divine powers attributed to the emperors, it seemed to threaten the unity of the empire. Rome had, in short, succeeded in impregnating the civilized world with a sense of its unity; and it was the liberty of belief and thought, and (in some degree) the political liberty, which it secured to that world which made possible the reconciliation of so many and such diverse peoples and creeds.

## SEMINAL IDEAS OF CIVILIZATION

The supreme achievement of the Romans, and the greatest expression of their tolerance and their practical common sense, lay in the sphere of law. Starting, like all primitive peoples, with the idea that the customary law was something ordained by the gods, a mystery known only to those of the Blood, the Patricians, they early escaped from the shackles of this conception, when they were faced by the necessity of embodying Patricians and Plebeians in the same state. By successive enactments made by the whole people, they obliterated this caste distinction almost completely. Then they found means of adjusting their own laws to the needs of the growing federation of Italian peoples which they built up. When they began to win empire over strange peoples, beginning with the mixed races of Sicily, they gradually wrought out — not by any sweeping enactments, but in a long series of edicts and judicial decisions made by the praetors who were responsible for the administration of the conquered provinces — a system of law so just and so flexible that it could be applied under widely different conditions: a *jus gentium* which represented the greatest common measure of the legal systems of many different peoples.

In the imperial period the provinces were no longer regarded as mere conquered territory to be exploited for the use of its masters; the whole civilized world was gradually welded into a single society, living under a single system of rational law; and the greatest part in this achievement was played by great jurists who devoted themselves to perfecting and codifying the system. It was by the authority of the emperors, who became steadily more despotic, that the work of codification was carried on, until it culminated in the great codes of Justinian, issued at a moment when the empire was already in process of dissolution.

But the lawyers always claimed that the authority of the emperors themselves derived from the acceptance of them by the people, who were regarded as the ultimate source of



## ROME AND THE REIGN OF LAW

all law. The sovereignty of the people was deeply embedded in Roman Law. And the lawyers were also influenced by the ideas of the philosophers, especially the Stoics, who laid it down that there was a *Lex Naturae*, a Law of Nature, which was binding upon all peoples, and which may be conceived of as representing the moral order of the universe. It was of the essence of the Law of Nature that all men were by nature free and equal; and although this theory was never translated into practice, and slavery continued to be the basis of civilized life, nevertheless the theory found its place in law, and was handed down to succeeding ages.

Thus the Romans gradually wrought out a system of law which was like no other that had ever existed. It claimed to be of universal application throughout the civilized world. It was not arbitrary, that is to say, it did not embody merely the commands of a master; rather it was adjusted to reason and to common-sense morality. It was capable of being, and it generally was, impartially administered to free men of many different races. It was not fixed and unalterable, but was constantly adjusted to meet changing needs.

Rome thus passed on to the barbarian peoples who overthrew her the great conception that men ought to live under the Reign of Law, and that law lost its validity unless it was just and in accord with the moral order. The barbarian peoples, who all venerated the august structure which they had destroyed, were deeply affected by the Roman system of law. When a revival of civilization in Europe began in the twelfth century, one of the features of it was an eager study of Roman Law as it had been defined by Justinian's codifiers and commentators.

A just and equal system of law is the very foundation of liberty; where a man is not sure that he will be protected in the exercise of his rights by the law, backed by the strength of the community, no true liberty can exist. Those who think of law as a restriction of liberty are deeply in error;

## SEMINAL IDEAS OF CIVILIZATION

liberty cannot exist except under the protection of law. And because this is true, it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the magnitude of the gift which Rome contributed to the civilization of the West.

Great people as the Romans were, they were hard and cruel; and their cruelty showed itself in nothing more clearly than in their treatment of slaves. No other civilized people has ever dreamed of training strong young men to slaughter one another in the arena for the entertainment of a blood-thirsty crowd: this was only possible because slaves were regarded in practice, whatever the philosophers might say, as having no human rights. When they conquered cities or tribes, the Romans did not hesitate to sentence whole populations, tens of thousands at a time, to be sold as slaves. Italy was swamped with them. In large parts of the country great estates, tilled by gangs of slaves, became the common method of cultivation; slave-labour tended to displace free labour, as bad money drives out good; and the results were that the sturdy small farmers, who had been the backbone of the Roman armies, declined woefully in numbers, and that a large unemployed proletariat grew up in Rome. The same process was at work in other lands; and the degrading influence of slavery was probably the main factor in the decay of the Roman Empire.

The strength of Rome, as of Greece, had sprung from the liberty that was enjoyed by a multitude of free cities. In a real degree this liberty still survived under the early empire: the self-respecting and self-governing communities of the provinces were not much affected by the often fantastic tyrannies of some of the emperors. But in the later empire, from the third century onwards, the emperors became more and more like oriental despots; they governed the provinces through officers who often swept aside local liberties; and the responsibility of collecting very heavy taxation, which was thrust upon the ruling officers of the towns, progressively

## WORTH OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

ruined them, and led men to shrink from the exercise of self-governing rights. The Roman Empire decayed rapidly, in part because the virility of its population was sapped by slavery, in part because the real freedom which its peoples had been allowed to enjoy became more and more unreal. It was this inner decay which brought about the downfall of the empire at the hands of the barbarians of Germany, whom its flaccid rulers had been driven to enlist for its defence.

Civilization declined because liberty diminished.

### §3 CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORTH OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

The greatest and noblest of the seminal ideas which have been the lifeblood of European civilization came from among the Jews.

Out of a primitive religion like that of other early peoples — out of the worship of a tribal God who could be angry and violent, who rejoiced in the smell of blood and of burning flesh, and to whom his worshippers offered sacrifices in the hope that he would help them to slaughter their enemies — the great prophets of Israel developed a faith which put the life of society and of the individual in a new setting. Truly inspired, they pointed men to a God Who was the creator of the universe, yet at the same time the Father of all who would 'walk humbly with Him'; a God Who 'loved righteousness and hated iniquity', and Who valued only the sacrifice of 'a humble and a contrite heart'.

This teaching was, in fact, confined to the Jews themselves; for although they incorporated some subject tribes, they were never an actively proselytizing people. They still thought of their God as peculiarly their own, and conceived of his worship as demanding the strict observance of elaborate ritual

## SEMINAL IDEAS OF CIVILIZATION

and moral codes which the priesthood had imposed upon them, and which made their system repellent to other peoples. Judaism was not a static but a developing creed. It learnt much from the Hellenistic philosophy, some of the leaders of which were themselves Jews; and it prepared the way for the greatest of all religious teachers, Jesus of Nazareth, who swept aside ritual and gave to those who heard him a message that was simple, yet noble and exacting in proportion to its simplicity.

Jesus left no written record of his teaching, which has to be extracted from the writings of men who wrote long after his death, who acknowledged that they did not fully comprehend him, and who blended with his teaching something of the thought of their day. But it is clear that he gave to his followers no detailed theology, no ecclesiastical organization, no ritual save a short prayer in which they were to address God as their Father, no ordinances or commandments save two — 'Judge not', and 'Thou shalt love'. All these things — theology, ecclesiasticism, ritual, ordinances — were added to Christianity after his death. Yet his essential teaching was revolutionary. It was that all men, whether slave or freeman, Jew or Gentile, were alike Sons of God, and of equal value in his sight; capable of being in communion with Him, capable of being His agents and fellow-workers in the unfinished work of creation, in the endless task of bringing about the triumph of Rightness, which he called the Kingdom of God upon earth. What an inspiring challenge to a world full of cruelty, to a world most of whose inhabitants were rightless slaves! Slave or emperor, Jesus said in effect, you are alike Sons of God and equal in God's sight. There was in this something akin to the teaching of the Stoics that all men are by nature free and equal; but this was not a merely intellectual creed, it was set aflame by the emotion of love.

Jesus was supremely an individualist. He was not concerned with organized society or the social system: all he was

## WORTH OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

concerned with was the relation between the individual soul and its Maker, and the establishment of love as the supreme rule of life. Hence his teaching came to be identified with the 'salvation' of the individual soul from the chains and penalties of sin; and even in the earliest Christian theology his death came to be regarded as a sacrificial mystery, an atonement for the sins of man. This idea, which became the central doctrine of Christianity, was the more readily accepted because it was in harmony with the teaching of other mystery religions which were widely spread in the Roman world, such as Mithraism, in which the votary was actually washed in the blood of a sacrificial victim, as a sign of purification and salvation.

These, among other causes, facilitated the amazingly rapid growth of Christianity, which, under the shelter of the Roman peace, spread along the great Roman roads so swiftly that by the fourth century after Christ it had become the dominant faith of the civilized world, and was ready to be accepted as the established religion of the Roman Empire. It passed under the control of a highly organized priesthood; it built up elaborate theologies and a complex ecclesiastical structure, modelled upon the system of Rome. The simple and noble teaching of Jesus was obscured by these encrustations; the moral grandeur of his personality was made less real by the mysteries in which it was cloaked. Even so, nothing could destroy its appeal, and it continued to be the inspiration of myriads of simple folk.

By a strange concatenation of events, Christianity, born in an eastern country, became the religion of Europe, and therefore of western civilization. The victories of Mohammedanism in the seventh and eighth centuries obliterated Christianity in Palestine its birthplace, in Syria where it received its name, in Asia Minor where Paul won its first great victories, and in northern Africa, the home of one of its great teachers, Augustine. But the European parts of the

## SEMINAL IDEAS OF CIVILIZATION

Roman Empire still clung to it; from them it spread over all Europe; Christendom and western civilization became practically coterminous; and the Christian Church became, during the dark ages of barbarian invasion and destruction, the spokesman and guardian not only of Christian teaching, but of what survived of the traditions of Greece and Rome.

It is indeed a remarkable thing that western civilization should thus have been identified with Christianity, and kept by that fact in some degree of unity, so that the realm of western civilization was long known as the *respublica Christiana*. The reason is, surely, that there was a natural affinity between this religion, which ultimately rests upon the assertion of the infinite value of human personality, and the civilization in which the seeds of freedom had already been planted by Greece and Rome.

These are the three pillars upon which western civilization rests: the passion for liberty and the belief in the sovereignty of reason, which were born in Greece; the belief in the sovereignty of a just and rational system of law and in the essential unity of the civilized world, which came from Rome; and the belief in the equal value of all men before God, and therefore in the sanctity of human personality, which came with Christianity. All these ideals implied the close connection and the mutual dependence of civilization and liberty.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MIDDLE AGES

#### § I THE GRADUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF SLAVERY

THE thousand years from the fifth century to the fifteenth are generally known as 'the Middle Ages'; they were the ages of transition from the ancient to the modern world. It used to be said, and believed, that during this long era all that the ancient world had gained for civilization and for the emancipation of the human spirit had been lost. But this is far indeed from being the truth. The truth rather is that during these centuries new foundations were laid, upon which a free civilization could rise.

The Middle Ages saw the rise of universities, as centres of creative thought. They gave birth to representative government and to the national type of State. They planted, so deeply that they could not be uprooted, the ideas they inherited from the ancient world, which had never succeeded in translating them into facts — the ideas that the object for which States exist is justice, and not merely power, that there is a moral law to which States as well as individuals are subject, that all men are by nature free, and equal in the sight of God, that rulers should only be obeyed so long as they rule justly, and that the people are the ultimate source of all authority. These doctrines were almost commonplaces of medieval political thinkers. They were not fully carried into effect, but they were held up as an ideal; and the medieval mind was tolerant of conflict between theory and practice.

Guided in part by these ideas, but mainly by economic

## THE MIDDLE AGES

forces, the Middle Ages got rid of slavery, which had vitiated ancient civilization, and had been the underlying cause of its decay. This was a great achievement, even if it was largely an unconscious one. It made possible the creation of a free civilization, towards which the modern world has been labouring.

Two broad stages may be perceived in this slow process of development; they correspond roughly with the two eras into which the long medieval period may be divided. The first six centuries, from the fifth to the eleventh, may truly be described as the Dark Ages. During their course Europe was in incessant turmoil, and the law and peace which Rome had maintained seemed to have vanished. Hosts of barbarians from the forests of Germany ravaged the peaceful provinces, plundered their inhabitants, and fought one another: law was the will of the strongest, and liberty no more than freedom to kill and plunder. This anarchy was indeed, as we shall see, to some extent qualified by the influence of the Church; and the darkness was for a short time lightened when Charlemagne in name restored the Roman Empire and gave a supreme secular ruler to Latin Christendom. But the light faded again in the two centuries after Charlemagne, when all Europe was ravaged from the north, the east and the south by Northmen, Magyars and Saracens, and when feudalism grew up in its first crude forms as a means of protection against this chaos.

It was in this period that absolute chattel slavery gradually disappeared, and was replaced by serfdom of various types and grades. The Church looked with disfavour upon the buying and selling of human souls. But a more important cause of the change was that the barbarian conquerors, constantly engaged in war, could not manage large numbers of slaves, and found it easier to get their lands tilled by serfs who were paid for their services by small holdings of their own. The serfs were bound to the soil, and were very much



## GRADUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF SLAVERY

at the mercy of their masters. But at least they had huts and patches of land of their own, and this was better than mere slavery. And, as the feudal order developed with its elaborate system of rights and duties, they found that even they were not wholly rightless. They were usually members of a court presided over by the lord's steward or bailiff, in which their agricultural duties were defined, and in which custom gradually secured to them some modest rights. The first step had been taken towards the abolition of the iniquity of slavery, which had accompanied man's slow advance since civilization began.

The second half of the Middle Ages, from the eleventh century to the fifteenth, was marked by a great religious, intellectual and political revival, some features of which we shall presently have to consider. It was in this period that the characteristic features of medieval life were at their best, and that the real foundations were laid of the system of liberty which the modern era has developed. The countries of western Europe — France, western Germany, Italy, England and Spain — were the homes of this revival; and in these countries the next great step was gradually and imperfectly taken towards the abolition of slavery.

The numerous towns in which growing trade found its centres offered a refuge to many serfs: custom ordained, in most countries, that if a serf could dwell in a town for a year and a day, he became a free man, and his lord had no further claim upon him. More important, the feudal lords of the countryside began to want ready money, wherewith to purchase the luxuries which trade offered them, and to play their parts in the warfare of the time, and in the life of the courts of growingly powerful kings. They were often glad to accept fixed money payments in lieu of some or all of the services which their serfs were expected to render; and so long as these money payments were regularly paid, the serfs were practically free men.

## THE MIDDLE AGES

When, in the fourteenth century, the terrible plague of the Black Death swept over Europe, and destroyed perhaps half of the labouring population, many lords regretted the concessions they had made, and strove to force back into serfdom the workers who were escaping from it; but the scarcity of labour gave the whip hand to the peasantry, and, in the countries (such as England) where freedom had made the greatest advance, the result was that progress towards liberty was in the end rather accelerated than retarded. Before the close of the fifteenth century serfdom had practically disappeared from England; it had greatly diminished in France, the Netherlands, and other regions of western Europe, though it was as prevalent as ever, and perhaps more prevalent, in the eastern part of the continent. If we had sufficient knowledge to make a map shaded according to the prevalence of serfdom at the close of the Middle Ages, it would show England practically white, and the shadow deepening from west to east, until it was at its darkest in Poland and Russia.

In this, as in other respects, the West was the home of freedom; and, largely for that reason, the West was to play the leading part in the development of civilization. Serfdom survived in Russia and Poland until the middle of the nineteenth century; but, by the close of the Middle Ages, freedom of movement and some freedom of enterprise for the mass of workers had become normal in the West. The relations between master and servant were ceasing to be fixed by an almost unalterable *status*, and were being determined by *contract*. And although it was still true that the servant was at a great disadvantage in fixing the terms of his contract of service, yet even so a great advance had been made: the system of sheer chattel slavery, which had been the ruin of the ancient world, had practically disappeared from Europe, although it still survived throughout the rest of the world.

## THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH

### § 2 THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH TO CIVILIZATION AND TO LIBERTY

Two features especially distinguished the medieval civilization from those of the ancient and of the modern world. The first was the domination of men's minds by the Church and the Papacy. The second was feudalism, a system of social organization which came into existence in the ninth century, and (with many variations of form) mainly determined the social and political life of Europe during the following centuries.

During the Dark Ages the Church was the one civilizing influence amid barbarism. Heroic missionaries brought the pagans of England, of Scandinavia, of Germany, of Hungary, into the fold of Christendom. The Church succeeded in imposing upon the whole population of western Europe a single accepted view of life and of the universe which implied the existence of a supreme moral governance of the world, whereof the Church itself, and its head the Pope, were the exponents. Even the baronial devils believed, and often trembled: and by playing upon their superstitious terrors, the Church was often able to restrain their excesses. It was able to refine and ennoble the life of the warrior by imposing upon newly dubbed knights the lofty vows of chivalry. It kept erect the standard of an ideal. It provided, especially in its numerous monasteries, oases of peace in the midst of turmoil, where men could cultivate the spiritual and the intellectual life, could copy and preserve the literature of the past, and could give the rudiments of learning to those who were willing to learn. It kept alive a sense of the unity of western civilization, the *respublica Christiana*; and this found expression in successive attempts to restore the old Roman Empire that had once given peace and justice to the world. But these restorations were never effective: the Holy Roman Empire of Charle-

## THE MIDDLE AGES

magne, and later of the German kings, never succeeded in winning an accepted supremacy throughout the western world. The Church, rather than any lay power, was always the true representative of the unity of civilization, and of the moral law to which all men ought to be subject.

In the centuries from the twelfth to the fourteenth, when medieval civilization was at its best, the influence of the Church was profoundly felt in every part of western Europe. Under her aegis, universities came into being, as centres of learning and thought; and although the stir of new thought which they fostered was dangerous to the Church's authority, the universities always regarded the Church as the very core of civilization, and its head, the Pope, as the supreme representative of the moral order. All over Europe the same holy offices were said in the same language, Latin, which was the common medium of communication for all educated men. The Papacy was the head of a vast hierarchy, which extended from Warsaw to Galway, and from Trondhjem to Palermo. It had a local agent in every parish priest, and a stronghold in every monastery and friary. The preaching friars, wandering over the face of Europe, were its travelling representatives.

So great was the power of the Church over the minds of men that the great popes of this period, Gregory VII, Innocent III, Gregory IX, Boniface VIII, were tempted to claim not merely a spiritual but a temporal supremacy over the *respublica Christiana*. They waged long controversies with emperor after emperor, which reduced the empire to futility, and sentenced Germany to anarchy. They excommunicated powerful kings and released their subjects from their allegiance. They almost turned Europe into a theocracy ruled by priestcraft.

But not all the veneration which the peoples owed to the Church could make them tolerate this conclusion. The secular claims of the Church were broken by the rise of strong national monarchies even before the medieval system came

## THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH

to an end with the Protestant Reformation, which shattered the spiritual unity of Europe. An attempt was made to preserve unity by the General Councils of the fifteenth century; they strove in vain to bring about a reform of the Church 'in its head and in its members', and to bring papal autocracy under the control of a representative body; but the attempt came too late.

Since it claimed to be the divinely appointed guardian of ultimate truth, the Church restricted freedom of thought within very narrow limits. The Humanism of the Greeks, their delight in the strength and beauty of the human body and their fearless trust in the powers of reason, were forgotten: in the medieval view this life was no more than a preparation for the life hereafter; it was a man's duty to mortify the flesh; and to put one's trust in the frailty of human reason, especially when it dared to question the divinely inspired teachings of the Church, was mortal sin. When men felt thus, the intellectual liberty and the spirit of free criticism, which had been the glory of the Greeks, were gravely impaired. As always, priestly power was necessarily hostile to freedom of thought.

Yet not even the immense authority of the Church could destroy the eagerness of men to think their own thoughts. Many heresies sprang up in Europe, often from seeds that came from the East. They were ruthlessly crushed out, and the Church did not disdain to enlist the civil power against them — as in the horrible Albigenian crusades of the thirteenth century, which almost destroyed the burgeoning civilization of southern France. To guard against heresy the Inquisition was established; from the thirteenth century onwards, it imposed a rigid orthodoxy upon the great majority. But it could not destroy the movement of thought, and the under-current of protest and challenge still went on. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Wycliffe and the Lollards in England, Huss and his brave followers in Bohemia,

## THE MIDDLE AGES

almost anticipated the Protestant Reformation; and these were only the most outstanding among many obscure movements.

Even under the aegis of the Church itself, the urge towards greater freedom was irresistibly working. It was under the protection of the Church that the first universities came into existence; and when these institutions had brought together bodies of young men who were athirst for knowledge, had given them access to books, and had brought them under the spell of great teachers, the ferment of thought could not be checked. Within the permitted limits, and sometimes beyond them, such men as Anselm, Abelard, Arnold of Brescia, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus and Marsilius of Padua reasserted the power of reason, and turned the universities into factories of explosive ideas. The wandering students who were to be seen on all the roads of Europe, facing hunger and danger in the quest for knowledge, carried these ideas into every part of Christendom. The more daring thinkers might be condemned by the Church, as some of them were; but they raised the standard of intellectual liberty.

Among the main subjects of study in the universities was Roman Law, as codified by Justinian. In the codes students saw reflected the picture of an ordered society far different from the confusion of feudal Europe — a society in which men's rights and duties were clearly defined, and protected or enforced by the power of the State. They became impatient of the existing disorder; and everywhere the students of Roman Law were the most ardent advocates of an effective power, imperial or royal, which could impose peace and justice upon a warring world. They were apt to emphasize authority at the expense of liberty, and did much to stimulate the growth of royal absolutism, which was already beginning in the later stages of the medieval period, and which was to become dominant during the greater part of the modern era.

## THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH

The absolutist tendencies of the 'civilians', as the teachers of Roman Law were called, were, however, by no means the most prominent elements in medieval political thought. The Church, constantly engaged in a struggle with the lay powers for the maintenance of what it conceived to be the moral order, never took an absolutist view, except in regard to its own rights. It taught — it was bound to teach — that rulers must always be subject to the law and that unjust rulers could rightfully be deposed; and, in support of this doctrine, it upheld the theory that the people, under God, were the ultimate source of all authority. In doing so, the Church gave an immense reinforcement to the movement for the restriction of royal power which was, as we shall see, one of the most remarkable features of the later Middle Ages.

The uncompromising boldness with which these ideas were maintained by the clearest thinkers of the age may be illustrated by quotations from two very different writers, the great scholastic philosopher and pillar of orthodoxy, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), and the imperialist opponent of extreme papal claims, Marsilius of Padua (1270-1342).

A king who is unfaithful to his duty [wrote Aquinas] forfeits his claim to obedience. It is not rebellion to depose him, for he is himself a rebel, whom the nation has a right to put down. But it is better to abridge his power, that he may be unable to abuse it . . . All political authority is derived from the people, and all laws ought to be made by them or by their representatives. There is no security for us so long as we depend upon the will of another man.

Marsilius went even farther.

Laws derive their authority [he wrote] from the people, and are invalid without their assent . . . As men are equal, it is wrong that one should be bound by laws made by another. In obeying laws to which all men agree, all men, in fact, govern themselves. The monarch

## THE MIDDLE AGES

... is responsible to the people, and subject to the law ... The rights of citizens are independent of the faith which they profess; and no man ought to be punished for his religion.

These are ideas far in advance of any that were to be put into practice for centuries to come. When such ideas could be enunciated by great divines and scholars, it is evident that the spirit of liberty was alive. It was growing as civilization grew; or, rather, civilization was reviving because the ideal of liberty was being reborn. Justice demands a recognition of the fact that, while the Church strove to restrict intellectual liberty, it encouraged and fostered political liberty in this age.

But practice as yet lagged far behind theory; and the medieval mind was always strangely tolerant of a conflict between theory and practice. It was not by churchmen and university teachers that these ideals could be translated into reality. That depended upon kings, nobles, merchants and common folk. But these also were learning to think and act for themselves. We must turn to consider their achievements.

### §3 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The characteristic social and political system of the Middle Ages was feudalism. It grew up naturally in the ninth and tenth centuries, when powerful men built castles for defence against the raids of the Northmen and others, and their neighbours became their vassals as the price of their protection. In different regions it assumed various forms, and the 'feudal system' was never a rigidly logical system. But it had become more or less systematized by the eleventh century; and when, at the end of that century, the Holy Land was conquered by Crusaders from almost every part of Europe,



## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

the little Kingdom of Jerusalem was endowed, by the Assize of Jerusalem, with a constitution which was intended to be a model of the feudal order in its perfection.

The feudal order was an elaborate system of rights and duties, based ultimately upon the tenure of land. The king or emperor held his realm from God, on the condition of good government; and if he failed in this duty, his barons might renounce their allegiance, or the Church might release his subjects from the duty of obedience. The greater barons held their lands from the king on condition of rendering military service, failure in which might involve forfeiture; the 'medial' barons and knights held from their lords on similar conditions; the lower ranks, whether freemen or serfs, owed service of various types for their holdings. Nobody *owned* land; everybody *held* it conditionally.

At each stage in the hierarchy there was a court, in which the tenant's rights and duties as defined by custom were enforced. These courts ranged from the king's court at the apex to the innumerable manor-courts at the base; and in all of them the tenants were the 'suitors' who declared the customary law under which vexed questions should be decided. Often enough king or baron over-rode the rights of their vassals. But custom has a way of becoming fixed, and this was a protection for the vassals. The feudal order was not, as it is sometimes thought to have been, merely an organization whereby the strong had the weak at their mercy, though it was often so used. At its best it was a complex of rights and duties which held the whole society together; and we must think of its courts as places in which an incessant struggle against overweening power could be, and often was, carried on.

In particular, the king's court could be, and was, used by the king's barons as a means of restricting his power. It was by the king's principal vassals, for example, that *Magna Carta* was exacted from John in England; in the next reign

## THE MIDDLE AGES

the Provisions of Oxford, imposed by the barons, brought the royal power under their control; and, in extreme cases, the barons might renounce their allegiance, as they did in the case of John, or even depose a bad monarch, like Edward II. In particular, they insisted that no dues or taxes should be imposed upon them without their consent, other than those authorized by established custom. These examples are drawn from England; but parallels, less sweeping but not less significant, might be drawn from other countries.

There were two important elements in medieval society which were more or less independent of the feudal order, and were outside its hierarchy. The first and the most important of these was the Church: the great prelates were always included in the king's court, as prelates and not merely as landholders. The second element had begun to be important as anarchy was tamed and trade grew. It consisted of the traders who had their centres in towns. These early became important and powerful in Italy and Germany, where the royal power was weak; the greater towns formed confederations, such as the Lombard League and the Hanseatic League, to defend their liberties. Even in England, where the royal authority was strong and economic development was more backward, they were becoming numerous during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and were receiving large privileges by grants from the kings.

With the growth of trade, and the new wealth it created, the towns became sufficiently important to rank as a third Estate of the Realm, the other Estates being the barons and the Church. In every country of western Europe, during the thirteenth century, the practice grew up of summoning gatherings of the Estates of the Realm, especially for the purpose of giving support to the king and authorizing taxes which went beyond custom. Usually there were three Estates, barons, churchmen and burghers. Sometimes there was a fourth Estate of the lesser barons. In one case only —

## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Sweden — there was an Estate of the peasants. The greater barons and the great prelates of the Church appeared in person. The other Estates — lesser barons and burghers — were too numerous to attend in person. They therefore had to choose representatives to act for them; and this was the real origin of the representative system, perhaps the greatest political invention of the Middle Ages.

It was in Spain — in the separate kingdoms of Castile, Leon and Aragon — that the system of Estates was first fully developed, and for a time exercised the greatest power. England, France and the chief principalities of Germany followed. In the fourteenth century the system of Estates, representing the chief elements in society, was almost universal throughout Europe, and, for a time, it seemed likely that the limiting of the power of kings by representative bodies would become the normal form of government throughout western civilization.

But for various reasons this did not happen, except in England; and centuries passed before the success of representative government in England inspired other countries to follow her example. Elsewhere the power of the Estates had already begun to decline before the close of the Middle Ages; and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they were almost everywhere swept aside, or, at the least, reduced to impotence. In Spain, for example, the separate Cortes of Castile and Aragon declined in importance when all Spain was united in a single realm. In France, the exacting demands of the States General in the middle of the fourteenth century, when the Hundred Years War with England was raging, made them seem to be a dangerous institution; the kings, who were fighting for the strength and unity of France, summoned them as seldom as possible; in the seventeenth century they fell into desuetude, and a hundred and seventy years passed before they were called together again, to inaugurate the French revolution.

## THE MIDDLE AGES

Meanwhile, in England, the Estates had developed into a real Parliament of two Houses. This was due to the way in which other English institutions had developed. The distinction between the lesser barons, properly so called, who were immediate tenants of the king, and the mass of country gentlemen who were vassals of great lords, had been obliterated by causes which we cannot here stop to analyse; and the whole class had found a field of activity in the Shire Courts of which the Norman and Angevin kings made much use, and, later, as justices of the peace for their shires. In this sort of work they were brought into contact with the burghers of the towns, with whom they also had economic interests in common, since both were equally concerned in the wool trade, then England's chief source of wealth. It therefore easily came about that the country gentlemen, who represented and were elected by the communities of the shires, and the traders, who represented and were elected by the communities of the boroughs, should sit together in a single House of Communes or Communities, which thus represented the whole people of England.

Meanwhile the Churchmen, who had for a time been elaborately organized as a separate Estate in which every section of the clerical order had been represented, had decided that they preferred not to take part in the national parliament, but to sit and make their grants separately in their own Convocation. All that now remained of the Estate of the clergy consisted of the great prelates and mitred abbots, who, as the Lords Spiritual, joined forces with the Lords Temporal in what came to be known as the House of Lords.

Thus in England, and in England alone, the system of three or four separate Estates developed into a true Parliament of two Houses; a legislature which genuinely represented the country as a whole. And during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this Parliament acquired a high

## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

degree of power. Taking advantage of the needs of the Crown during the Hundred Years War (when it was impossible for the king to 'live of his own', as he was usually expected to do), it obtained legal control over all taxation, apart from certain traditional dues. Instead of merely petitioning the king for the enactment of new laws, it took to presenting the laws which it wanted ready drafted in the form of Bills, and this became the regular procedure. It invented the method of 'impeaching' ministers whom it disliked before the House of Lords, the descendant of the feudal king's court. It was even employed to authorize the deposition of a king, Richard II, and the election in his place of a new king who was not the direct heir to the Crown. And in the first half of the fifteenth century its power was so great that the king had to accept its advice upon almost everything.

Unfortunately this omnipotent Parliament was used by factions of great nobles as a means of carrying on their feuds; and when these feuds developed into the anarchy of the Wars of the Roses, which killed off the rival factions, the people were well content that strong kings should take power into their own hands, as the Tudors did. But even under the Tudors, the sovereigns, powerful and masterful as they were, never ventured to raise taxes or to pass new laws without at least the formal consent of Parliament: Queen Elizabeth, though she commanded the affections of her people, had to exercise a rigid parsimony to save herself from complete dependence upon Parliament.

Thus, during the later Middle Ages, England had become politically a limited monarchy, and she continued to be so even under what has been loosely called the Tudor despotism. She was enabled to preserve the essentials of her liberty by two facts. In other countries, and notably in France, the king ruled his country largely through paid professional administrators appointed by himself—a rudimentary bureaucracy. England never had a bureaucracy until the nine-

## THE MIDDLE AGES

teenth century; the work of government was carried on in detail by the justices of the peace, drawn from among the country gentlemen who were the most independent, and the most politically active, element in the country, while local affairs were quite independently managed by innumerable borough councils and parish vestries: England was therefore, when the modern age began, a self-governing country in a fuller sense than any other country in the world. In the second place, in other countries, and notably in France, the monarchies were creating standing armies to enforce their will. England never had a standing army until late in the seventeenth century, when Parliament was strong enough to control it. The marked contrast between the political fortunes of England and of other countries in western Europe was mainly due to the absence in England, and the gradual development in other countries, of bureaucracies and standing armies.

In yet another respect England had an advantage over other countries of western Europe. In all countries law was based upon traditional customs, modified only by occasional legislation; and these customs varied from province to province. In some countries — Italy and southern France, in particular, where the Roman system had been deeply rooted — Roman Law survived, but it was blended with local customs. In others, such as Holland, Roman Law was deliberately introduced, but not until the very end of the Middle Ages. In England, however, the itinerant judges whom the Angevin kings sent round to every part of the country, developed, out of the variant customs of different regions, a 'common law' — a legal system common to the whole country — which greatly helped in the development of the nation's unity. What is yet more important, the people were called in to participate in the administration of the 'common law' through the jury system; and this helped to make them feel that the law was their own law, not some-

## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

thing imposed upon them from above. The result was that the rule of law became more of a reality in England than elsewhere; even during the anarchy of the fifteenth century, Sir John Fortescue could boast, in his book on *The Governance of England*, that the sovereignty of law was the greatest distinction of his country.

Thus, when the Middle Ages drew to their close, England, more fully than any other country, had secured the essentials of political liberty: serfdom had come to an end, the rule of law was solidly established, a true parliamentary system had come into being, and even under the strong and masterful Tudors, no law could be passed and no new taxes could be imposed without the assent of Parliament; and the monarchy was limited by the fact that it lacked both a bureaucracy and a standing army to enforce its will. Moreover the habit of managing their own affairs was deeply rooted among the English people, not only in Parliament, but in every grade of local government. For these reasons England was destined to lead the western peoples on the way of liberty, and (when the time came) to play the chief part in diffusing political liberty throughout the world.

It was the whole medieval complex of ideas about social life which made this possible in England, and nearly made it possible in the other western countries. What enabled the English people to give to the common ideas and institutions of the Middle Ages the special twist which made them the foundation of a stable system of liberty was the fact that her insular position saved her from invasion, and from the military organization which invasion necessitates. Since the Norman Conquest no foreign army has ever made a lodgment on English shores, unless (as in the last years of John) it came by invitation.

## THE MIDDLE AGES

### §4 THE EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONAL STATE

Yet another achievement of the Middle Ages — an unconscious and unplanned achievement — was the rise of nation-States in the western part of Europe.

It is not easy to say what constitutes a nation. Race certainly has very little to do with it, though once a nation is established in unity, it is prone to attribute its unity and character to race. But all the peoples of Europe are of very mixed races; and the countries in which national feeling has been strongest and most enduring, such as England and France, are among the most mixed. The possession of a clearly defined territory, with characteristic landscapes which win the affection of its people, is an important factor. Unity of language is even more important; yet it is not essential, as the cases of Scotland and Switzerland show. A common body of law, a long-established and accepted system of government, and a common tradition, are perhaps the most important factors. But in the ultimate analysis a body of people constitute a nation only when they passionately believe that they 'belong together', and are restless and unhappy if they are divided, or subjected to rulers whom they regard as alien. This belief can scarcely exist unless several of the factors we have enumerated are present, but probably no one of them is essential. Nationalism is ultimately a matter of sentiment.

But how powerful this sentiment can be! When it takes root among a people, it doubles their strength. When they feel that they are linked together not merely by common subjection to a master, but by powerful natural affinities, their loyalty, their pride in their nationhood, their capacity for resisting foreign enemies, are vastly increased. The nation-States of Europe, once established, have shown a toughness,



## EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONAL STATE

a coherence, a steadfastness even in disaster, which States of another kind whose unity depends wholly upon loyalty to a personal ruler have never been able to display.

Until nation-States began to emerge in the later Middle Ages, this type of State had never existed in the world. It came into being insensibly. The first of the European States to become conscious of its nationhood was England. It was shaped, no doubt, by the growth of the 'common law', by the possession of a common language created by the blending of French with Anglo-Saxon, by the existence of a firm and (on the whole) a just system of government, by resistance to papal power and to foreign favourites, and by conflicts with neighbouring peoples, the Scots, the Welsh, the French. It was already fully alive when Edward I, summoning his Model Parliament, called upon his people for a great effort, on the ground that the French king designed to blot out the English tongue from the earth. It found a mode of expression through the development of Parliament, and was aroused to intensity by the struggles of the Hundred Years War.

The French nation found itself, and learned to forget its provincial differences, in resistance to the English invasion; and national sentiment, centring in the king, was ennobled and sanctified by the life and death of that saint of nationality Joan of Arc. A struggle for independence against foreign aggression is always the most powerful stimulant of national feeling; and this sentiment was stirred in the little nations of Scotland and Wales, as in France, by resistance to their greater neighbour, with whom they were later to be linked without sacrificing their national identity. In Spain the long struggle against the Moors had lit the flames of patriotism in the little States into which the Iberian Peninsula was long divided. When, at the end of the fifteenth century, all but one of these little States were united under a single crown, national feeling grew in strength, though it had to fight against the separatism of the little kingdoms which had been

## THE MIDDLE AGES

absorbed. Finally, a small inchoate nation-State had arisen in Switzerland, where the success of three Forest Cantons in resistance to the power of Austria during the thirteenth century brought into close alliance with them a cluster of neighbouring cantons. The case of Switzerland was to show that national sentiment was strong enough to override differences of language and tradition, though this was not fully demonstrated until the nineteenth century.

These were the nation-States which emerged into the arena of international politics during the later Middle Ages: England, Scotland, France, Spain and little Switzerland: perhaps we may add Poland in the east, which, although it had not achieved any strong governmental organization, was nevertheless able to play a great part in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, largely because it was inspired by the spirit of nationality. The other potential nation-States of Europe were still disunited, or, like the Scandinavian States, unwillingly combined; and for that reason they were to be the victims of the great nation-States during the next era.

The modern era was to be filled with the wars and the rivalries of the great nation-States. For that reason many have deplored their emergence, and have attributed to this fact the long international anarchy from which Europe has suffered since the fifteenth century. It was the potent force of nationalism which destroyed the medieval ideal of the *respublica Christiana*, the unity of civilization. Yet it may well be doubted whether this ideal could ever have been realized by medieval methods. Of the two great institutions to which the medieval mind trusted for its realization, one, the Holy Roman Empire, had never been more than a shadow, and its claim to supremacy had always been repudiated by the greater States of the West; the other, the Papacy, had already lost much of its authority by attempting to turn a spiritual leadership into a temporal ascendancy. But the ideal, and indeed, the fact, of the unity of western civilization still

## EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONAL STATE

remained a challenge to the minds of men; it gave birth, as we shall see, to the system of international law, and to a succession of plans for the creation of a scheme of common regulation which culminated in the formation of the League of Nations.

It is, indeed, useless to condemn the growth of the national spirit. It is the source of that variety of type, on the basis of a common civilization, which has given vitality to the development of Europe. If it is true that nearly all the wars of the modern age have been due to the ambitions of consolidated nation-States, or to the aspirations of divided or subject nationalities, it is also true that all the advances which have been made in the modern age, and, in particular, the conquest of the world by western civilization, have been due to the nation-States, and to the energy and confidence which the national spirit inspired in them.

We have learnt that freedom for each nationality to develop its own distinctive characteristics and to make its own contribution is one of the essential elements of liberty, and one of the secrets of a developing civilization: if national varieties were suppressed, stagnation would soon follow. We have learnt, also, that the nation is the soundest foundation for the State, and that national feeling is its strongest cement. Moreover, it is only in national States whose citizens are not divided by any fundamental disunity of tradition or outlook that the institutions of self-government have ever been made to work well.

The ideal towards which the world has been moving since the Middle Ages gave birth to the first nation-States is the ideal of a fellowship of free nations dwelling together in peace. But nationalism, when it is strongly developed, is apt to produce, in powerful nations, an intolerant egoism which may be very dangerous. Like fire it is of infinite service when under control, but can be destructive when it is out of control. The Middle Ages, which gave birth to nationalism, also

## THE MIDDLE AGES

held firmly that there ought to be effective means of expressing the unity of civilization, and of repressing disruptive and destructive factors. The means to which medieval society trusted for this purpose — the Empire and the Papacy — proved to be ineffectual. The task of finding more effectual means was bequeathed to the modern world, and has exercised many of the best minds throughout the course of modern history. It is the task of making the freedom of small as well as great nations secure; the task of restraining the egoism of powerful peoples when they are exulting in their strength; the task of reconciling national freedom with the unity of civilization. For these problems no adequate solution has yet been found. But that is no reason for condemning the national form of State, which was one of the greatest unconscious achievements of the medieval era.

It is foolish to undervalue the greatness of the contributions made by the Middle Ages to the growth of both liberty and civilization. That great era proclaimed high ideals, if it could not fully realize them. It brought about the abolition of chattel slavery, which had been the chief cause of the inner decay of the ancient world, and so made possible the rise of a truly free civilization. Its great thinkers gave a noble definition of the aims of a healthy civic life; its politicians developed out of feudalism the representative system; and although this broke down in most of the western European countries, in one country, England, it assumed a form which made the development of self-government, and ultimately of democracy, possible. Not least important, it saw the rise of the national type of State, which has been the secret of the vitality of the civilization of modern Europe.

The Middle Ages were — quite apart from their great artistic achievements — far indeed from being an era of darkness and retrogression. They laid the foundations of a new growth in human history.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FOUR GREAT CIVILIZATIONS

AT the end of the fifteenth century, when Europe was about to enter upon the modern age, during which the influence of her civilization was to be extended over the globe, there existed on the face of the earth four great and highly developed civilizations, the Chinese, the Indian, the Islamic or Mohammedan, and the European. They were distinct in their origins and development; and the connections between them had been (except in the case of the Islamic and the European) rare, slight and purely superficial.

If a visitor from another planet had, at that date, visited and studied all these four civilizations, which of them would have seemed to be the greatest, and the most likely to win dominion over the others? There cannot be much doubt that his choice would have been for the most ancient and the most deeply rooted of them all, the Chinese. It is extremely unlikely that he would have perceived in the European civilization the vital principles and the capacity for adaptation which were to give it, during the next four centuries, the leadership of the world.

#### § I THE CHINESE CIVILIZATION

The eighteen Provinces in the valleys of the three great rivers Hwang-ho, Yangtse-kiang and Sin-kiang, formed the true China; and they had enjoyed a longer common life than any like region in the world. Their population formed perhaps one-fifth of the total population of the world; and in the course of four thousand years they had developed a very stable and in some respects a very noble civilization.

## THE MIDDLE AGES

They were a peaceable, industrious, patient and trustworthy people, mostly engaged in agriculture, for which the land was divided into a multitude of small family holdings. But there were also great cities, in which the arts and crafts had been brought to a pitch of perfection unrivalled in any other land. Nowhere on the face of the earth have the arts of painting, weaving, embroidery and porcelain been practised with a more exquisite taste and skill. The Chinese also produced very lovely poetry, which the West has only recently begun to appreciate. They had a philosophic literature of immense antiquity; and no people has preserved fuller records of its long past. They had independently developed a considerable body of astronomical and other scientific knowledge; and they had invented printing, gunpowder and the mariner's compass long before these revolutionary inventions were known in Europe. They had invented, also, their own mode of writing; but as the symbols which they used represented, not letters, but words or ideas, an immense effort of memory was required to master them; and learning, though universally respected, was necessarily limited to a small class of *literati*.

In all the main aspects of civilization, then, China was far ahead of the other civilizations. It was extraordinarily stable; periodic eras of confusion, when there were changes of dynasty, did not seriously affect the current of its life. But if it was stable, it was also unprogressive. This was due to certain outstanding characteristics of the Chinese way of life.

The first was the extraordinary strength of the family tie. The head of each family wielded despotic sway over its members; in comparison with the preservation of the family's honour and fortunes, the individual life counted for nothing; and a deep-rooted practice of ancestor-worship gave a religious sanction to this system. The strength of the family tie kept the normal life of China at work even in periods of disorder. But it made the Chinese a backward-looking rather

## THE CHINESE CIVILIZATION

than a forward-looking people; it stunted individuality, and inhibited that ebullient enterprise which was to be the driving-force of western civilization.

Next should be named the profound influence upon this people of an ancient and traditional code of morals and manners, largely due to the philosopher Confucius, who lived in the sixth century before Christ. There has been no other instance in the world of such a code moulding so deeply and so lastingly the conduct and outlook of a great people. China was always tolerant of religious differences; but whatever religions her people might adopt, nothing weakened their ancestor-worship or their loyalty to the Confucian code.

But the lofty standards of morals and manners which the Confucian code imposed did not place any high value upon human life; the ultimate sacredness of individuality has never been cherished in China. There life pullulated so freely that it was little valued; female infants were habitually destroyed; floods and earthquakes periodically annihilated millions; wholesale massacres were ordinary incidents of war; cruel tortures were commonly used; and even the individual himself seemed to value his life at a very low price. To put a high value upon human life and its potentialities is one of the conditions of liberty.

Finally, each of the eighteen Provinces had from time immemorial been governed as a separate State, its ruling officers wielding absolute and arbitrary authority. So long as the required quota of revenue was forthcoming from a Province, and so long as there were no very loud complaints of misgovernment, the Imperial Government at Nanking or Peking seldom interfered; it lacked the machinery for securing that justice was impartially and uncorruptly administered. The Chinese, therefore, never knew the Rule of Law, which is the foundation of liberty.

Fine and noble as the Chinese civilization was in many of its aspects, it lacked the vivifying power of liberty; its

## THE FOUR GREAT CIVILIZATIONS

thoughts were turned backward rather than forward; and, regarding itself as having attained perfection, it looked upon the rest of the world incuriously, as occupied by 'outer barbarians', with whom it desired no contact. For these reasons this great people was sentenced to stagnation. A civilization may long exist in placidity, but it cannot grow or adapt itself to changing conditions if it lacks the vitality that springs from liberty.

### § 2 THE INDIAN CIVILIZATION

The immense rampart of mountain and desert which shuts off the sub-continent of India from the rest of the world has ensured that she should develop a distinctive civilization of her own. This rampart can only be crossed, by any large bodies of men, at one point in the north-west. Through the passes of the north-west came all the successive conquerors whose invasion created the immense variety of India's peoples, until the European peoples arrived by the sea-route.

The first of these invaders of whom there is definite record left the deepest mark upon the country. They were Aryans — cousins of the Greeks, the Romans and the Persians — and they arrived in India somewhere about 2000 B.C. From them came the great poetry and philosophy which were the sources of Indian thought. From them, also, came the beginning of the caste system, which has given to Indian society a texture different from that of any other human society. The Sanskrit word for caste means 'colour'; and the caste system began as a colour-bar between these fair-skinned early conquerors and their dark-skinned subjects. As time went on, the system became more elaborate, until there were thousands of castes whose members were forbidden to marry into other castes, bound to observe strict rules about eating, and in many cases tied to a particular occupation.



## THE INDIAN CIVILIZATION

The caste system is the essence of Hinduism, which rules the lives and thoughts of the majority of Indians; for Hinduism is a social system far more than a religion. It recognizes myriads of gods, having absorbed the pantheons of primitive tribes who have been brought into the system as separate castes; it includes a wide range of religious beliefs, from the dark superstitions of half-savage tribes to the lofty and rarefied philosophic faith of profound thinkers; but the one feature common to all Hindus is the belief that men are born into a particular caste, and are unalterably superior or inferior to their neighbours. The sanctions of religion buttress the caste system. Every Hindu believes that the soul of a man passes through a series of incarnations, that the caste into which a man is born has been determined by his behaviour in a previous incarnation, and that his only hope of a better lot in his next incarnation lies in the humble acceptance of his position, the strict observance of the rules of his caste, and the payment of profound respect to the highest caste, that of the Brahmins. It is not easy to imagine a more effective way of persuading the under-dog to be content with his lot, however abject.

The caste system was, and is, the most fundamental fact in the life and history of the Indian people; nowhere in the world is there anything to compare with it. It brought together, in a single social order, peoples of a great variety of race, speaking languages twice as numerous as those of Europe, holding a great variety of religious beliefs, and representing every stage of intellectual development; but it froze them into a permanent disunity. It kept the daily life of the country going, whatever wars and conquests might sweep over it; each caste went on with its traditional occupations; 'they watched the legions thunder by, and turned again' — not 'to thought', as the poet suggests, but to their accustomed ways of life, as little disturbed as the weeds in a river when a boat has passed through them. But against

## THE FOUR GREAT CIVILIZATIONS

these virtues of the caste system must be set the fact that it was an absolute negation of liberty, that it denied to all save members of the highest castes the possibility of making full use of their powers. Moreover, the frozen disunity which it created forbade any real blending of the sharply contrasted peoples of India, and made very difficult the rise of a spirit of patriotism among them. That is why successive conquerors found it so easy to impose their yoke upon them. That is why, for many centuries, the Indian peoples have always been subject to foreign rulers.

From the eleventh century of the Christian era to the eighteenth they were mostly ruled by Mohammedan conquerors, who came in, wave after wave, through the passes of the north-west from Central Asia. The Mohammedans were never more than a ruling class; only in two provinces were they ever even a bare majority of the population, and in India as a whole they were less than one-seventh of the total. But their presence, and the sharp conflict between their beliefs and those of their Hindu subjects, added greatly to the disunity of the country.

There was much that was noble in the civilization of India. Its religious thought was exalted and profound, and veneration for spiritual things was widespread among its peoples. Its craftsmen, more especially its spinners and weavers of cotton, surpassed all the artisans of Europe. But the capacities of the Indian peoples were restricted by the rigidity of their caste system, which denied to individuals, in all but the highest castes, any opportunity of developing their gifts. India lacked the salt of liberty, and was therefore condemned to stagnation. The peoples of India were divided by a multitude of barriers, of race, language, religion and caste. Unlike the Chinese, they had never acquired full political unity. They had never known the sovereignty of law, but had always been subject to arbitrary rule. They had never known the passion of patriotism, and were therefore ready to enlist in

## THE ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

the service of foreign masters. When the time came, the supremacy of the English in India was to be established mainly by armies of Indian soldiers. For all these reasons, the civilization of India was to be the first that was to be brought under the control of western peoples.

### § 3 THE ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

The third of the great civilizations, the Islamic or Moham-medan, was the youngest and the nearest to Europe. It had been built with extraordinary rapidity upon the ruins of the earliest civilizations in the world, which it completely submerged. In the seventh century after Christ, the Arabs had gone forth from their desert land, determined to conquer the world at the point of the sword for the faith which Moham-med had taught them. Resolute monotheists, they would have nothing to do with idols or images, saints or demigods; they believed that their sacred book, the Koran, gave them not only a creed, but a rule of life and an all-sufficient code of laws. In a single generation they overthrew the Persian Empire and obliterated its ancient Zoroastrian religion, while they tore from Christendom Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Within a century they had conquered northern Africa as far as the Atlantic; overrun Spain and been driven back with difficulty in the heart of France; and spread into Central Asia and Afghanistan. Rapid as these conquests were, they were extraordinarily permanent; the very memory of their earlier religions and modes of life was blotted out among the inhabitants of these wide lands; and the Realm of Islam as it was defined in the eighth century remains the Realm of Islam even to-day.

At first the Islamic Empire blossomed into a brilliant civilization, largely because it came under the influence of the Greeks. It produced great poets and a delicate and brilliant

## THE FOUR GREAT CIVILIZATIONS

architecture. While Europe lay in darkness, it studied and even developed the science of the Greeks, and it was from the Moslems that Europe learnt the use of Arabic numerals, and the science as well as the name of Algebra. Then the great empire broke into fragments; but even so, the Moslem States carried on an equal war against Christendom.

Towards the close of the Middle Ages, most of the wide realm of Islam passed under the sway of the warlike Turks from Central Asia, who despised learning and the arts; and the Islamic world, which had shown such brilliant promise, passed into intellectual stagnation, though still a very formidable military power.

The real strength of the Islamic civilization lay in the religious unity which it imposed upon all its subjects. In its great days, its head, the Caliph, united the temporal power of a Roman emperor with the spiritual authority of a medieval pope. No civilization has ever drawn greater strength from religious fervour; and it was because the critical habit of mind learnt from the Greeks was undermining this fervour that Islam was falling into decay from the eleventh century onwards.

Its revival under the Turks was accompanied, and perhaps caused, by a revival of rigid orthodoxy under the despotic sway of the Turkish Sultan-Caliphs. Both the strength and the weakness of Islam, alike in its early days of conquest, and its later period of military power under Turkish leadership, sprang from the rigidity of its creed. The final and unquestionable authority of the Koran, in every sphere of life, restricted freedom of thought and even freedom of enterprise. Moreover, from the first, and throughout its whole history, the only type of government which Islam contemplated was despotic. Its rulers, from the supreme Caliph downwards, wielded arbitrary power, qualified only by respect for the rules laid down by the Koran, which reflected the ideas of a primitive desert-civilization. Lacking the creative and

## THE EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

stimulating power of Liberty, Islam — great as were its achievements — was condemned to stagnation.

### §4 THE EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

In many material respects, the civilization of the West seemed to be far behind the other great civilizations. It lacked their unity, for Europe was broken up into a multitude of warring nations, petty feudal States and groups of independent cities. Although it enjoyed a common basis of moral ideas, due to the supremacy of the Church, even this was beginning to break up in the fifteenth century, and it was soon to be shattered by the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth. Nor was it ahead of the other civilizations in the practical arts, or in the organization of its social life — save that it had got rid of slavery, which still survived in China, India and the Islamic world, and that its more advanced societies were shaking themselves free of serfdom.

But in the western civilization there were deeply implanted the seeds of liberty; the zest of free criticism, which had come from the Greeks; the belief in the Rule of Law, which had come from the Romans; the ideas of the equal value of all men in the sight of God, and of the sacredness of personality since the inspiration of God comes only to individuals, which were the gift of Christianity. Because of these things, the guidance of human destiny lay with the western peoples.

## CHAPTER V

# CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START, 1450-1550

### § I THE GREAT TRANSITION

HISTORY is continuous; there is never any sudden breach in its development. But there have been some ages in which the changes in men's ideas and in their social organization were so rapid, and so crowded together, that, when we look back upon them, we seem to see mankind making a fresh start in its long pilgrimage, and changing the course of its destiny. We are ourselves living in an age of this character.

There has been no age in which the transition into a new era of human achievement has been more obvious — not, indeed, to contemporaries, who can never appreciate the profundity of the changes that are taking place around them, but to historical retrospect — than the age in which the medieval passed into the modern era.

Transitions of this momentous and many-sided character can never be exactly dated. It is absurd to say that the modern world began with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, or with the discovery of America in 1492, or with the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII of France in 1494, or with the publication of Luther's theses in 1517, or, indeed, with any particular episode or in any precise year. But all these dates, which various writers have fixed upon as marking the beginning of the modern age, fall between the middle of the fifteenth and the middle of the sixteenth century. Each of them stands for something new and revolutionary in human affairs. Evidently so many critical changes were taking place during those hundred years that, in combination, they

## RISE OF NATIONAL MONARCHIES

brought about the beginning of a new era in human history.

We must attempt to take a broad view of these changes, and consider how they affected civilization, and in what ways they contributed to the growth of liberty. Some of them — the invention of printing and the discovery of America — were definitely new beginnings. Others had been long in incubation: we have seen them emerging in the Middle Ages, but they became clear in this stirring century. In yet others — notably in the breakdown of the unity of western civilization, and in the decline of political liberty — there was, at first and for a long time, a retrogression from the ideals and the achievements of the Middle Ages.

### § 2 THE DECAY OF MEDIEVALISM AND THE RISE OF NATIONAL MONARCHIES

This century saw, in the first place, the breakdown of the medieval scheme of social organization — the unity of the *respublica Christiana*, on the one hand, represented by the Holy Roman Empire and the spiritual authority of the Papacy; and, on the other hand, feudalism.

The Holy Roman Empire had never been more than a dream. There was a revival of this dream in the first half of the sixteenth century, when Charles V inherited such vast and scattered dominions that it seemed possible for him to achieve the lordship of the western world. But he was crippled by the growing national sentiment in his diverse territories, in Spain, the Netherlands and Germany, and by the vigour of the national resistance of France. Nationalism would have wrecked the last chance of making the Holy Roman Empire a reality, even if Charles had not also had to deal with the Protestant Reformation, and with the formidable danger of Turkish aggression. After Charles's abdication in 1555, the empire became merely the most powerful

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

among the very numerous petty States into which Germany had broken up. The chief result of the imperial dream was that its association with the German kingdom prevented Germany from attaining national unity, and left her at the mercy of her more powerful neighbours.

The authority of the Church and of the Pope had been, as we have seen, a very real thing in the Middle Ages; it had been the real guardian of the unity of the *respublica Christiana*. But the Papacy and the Church were already losing their hold over the minds of men, discredited by the worldliness of great prelates, by the greed and corruption of monks and friars, and by the unconscionable exactions of the papal courts. The authority of the Papacy had been impaired by the 'Babylonish Captivity' of the fourteenth century, when the Popes had withdrawn from Rome to Avignon, where they were under the influence of the French monarchy. It had been made contemptible by the great schism which followed when rival popes hurled anathemas at one another, and bid for the support of powerful princes. A series of great Councils in the early fifteenth century strove to reform the Church, and to turn the Papacy into a sort of constitutional monarchy. But the 'Conciliar Movement' was a failure. The dissolution of the Council of Basel, the last of the series, in 1455, made it almost inevitable that the failure of constitutional reform would be followed by violent revolution. Already the Wycliffite movement in England and the Hussite movement in Bohemia (which was almost as much national as religious) had partially anticipated the Protestant Reformation.

Both on the secular and on the spiritual side, the universalism which the medieval mind cherished had visibly broken down.

Its place was being taken by the strong national States which had grown up during the later Middle Ages. Already, in the Hundred Years War, France and England had exemplified the national conflicts and rivalries which were to



## RISE OF NATIONAL MONARCHIES

be the main stuff of European history during the modern age. When, in 1494, Charles VIII of France invaded Italy, and involved his country in a dreary series of wars with Spain for the domination of that country, the conflicts of organized nation-States for dominance in Europe definitely began. That is why 1494 is commonly taken as the date when modern history began.

The rising national sentiment of the great nation-States found its focus in a king: that was so, under the Tudors, even in constitutional England; and in other countries the monarchies strove to bring every organ of national life under their control. For the most part, they had the support of their peoples in this aim; for a strong central power was needed to enforce national unity, to maintain law and order, and to subjugate the surviving strength of feudalism.

The political strength of feudalism was, indeed, everywhere decaying. The steel armour and the stone castle, which had given to the nobles an inexpugnable superiority over their vassals, were unable to resist the impact of gunpowder, which had come into general use in the fourteenth century, or the skill of trained professional troops, which were replacing the feudal levy. Only powerful monarchs could afford to maintain trains of artillery or large mercenary forces.

It was the aim of all the monarchies to subjugate the feudal nobility, and to transform it into a mere nobility of the court, dependent upon royal favour. But the greater feudatories did not willingly submit to the loss of their power, or to the bringing of their vassals under the direct control of the crown. The struggle was incessant, but its result was inevitable, because the sympathies of the people were almost always enlisted on the side of the king, who was striving to restrain feudal anarchy. During the hundred years from 1550 to 1650 Europe was desolated by long wars of religion, which gave to the nobles opportunities of restoring their power. It was not until the end of these long wars that

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

monarchy finally triumphed. But the trend towards absolute monarchy was already apparent at the opening of the modern age. Even in Germany and Italy, where there was no strong central power, the rulers of the petty States that had developed out of feudal principalities were bringing their vassals into subjection.

As their power grew, the monarchs naturally regarded with disfavour the rights claimed by the representative Estates whose rise had been among the most remarkable features of political development in the Middle Ages. They could not simply sweep them aside; but they summoned them as rarely as possible, and for the most part disregarded their claim to be consulted on all legislation, and on the voting of all taxes. It was only in England that a parliamentary system survived through this period of growing monarchical power, and that the monarchs, even the great Tudors, recognized the necessity of parliamentary assent for laws and taxes.

It may well seem that the establishment of absolute monarchy as the characteristic form of government in Europe, and the withering away of the representative bodies which had come into existence in almost all the European countries, was a grave set-back for the cause of liberty. And so, in many ways, it was. If Europe could have been saved from the incessant wars that sprang from the unregulated ambitions of national States, the political liberties that were born in the Middle Ages might have survived: they survived in England only because of England's insular security.

But there is something to be said on the other side. The Estates had nowhere been able to control the anarchy of decaying feudalism. Even in England, the weakness of parliamentary government had encouraged lawlessness. The truth is that the peoples of Europe were not yet ready for the great experiment of political liberty, which demands a loyalty, a readiness to accept compromise, and a habit of

## EMERGENCE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

law-abidingness, that can only be created by long training. Whatever their defects — and they were many — the monarchies did at least tame anarchy. They ensured the steady maintenance and enforcement of law; and law is the foundation of liberty. If they denied political liberty to their subjects, they at least created the shelter under which other forms of liberty could flourish.

### § 3 THE EMERGENCE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

In no respect was the growth of freedom in this era more marked than in the growth of a new and powerful middle class, which was made possible by the rapid expansion of trade; and that, in its turn, was due to the better order which the monarchies preserved.

Trade and industry had grown steadily during the later centuries of the Middle Ages, especially since the Crusades had brought western Europe into direct contact with the traffic that came from the East: eastern luxuries had been disseminated throughout Europe by the merchants of Venice, Genoa and Barcelona. But the rising power of the Turks, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, had impeded this rich traffic. It was this which turned the thoughts of men towards the possibility of circumventing the Turk by finding new ways of access to the wealth of the East, and thus stimulated the great discoveries which distinguished this age. Before the close of the fifteenth century the route to India by the Cape of Good Hope had been disclosed and the new continent of America had been revealed; before the middle of the sixteenth century an immense volume of oceanic trade was pouring into and enriching Europe.

Apart from this, the production and interchange of their goods among the European peoples were growing very fast, because of the better order that now existed. The wines of

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

France, the woollen fabrics of Flanders and England, the silks and fine metal-work of Italy, the output of the mines of Germany and Spain, the timber, fish and furs of the Baltic, were all in growing demand; and the rising middle class saw its opportunity in the production and interchange of these and other goods.

In the medieval period both production and distribution had been seriously restricted by the regulations of the 'gilds' and 'misteries' (*metiers*) under which practically all trade had to be carried on. These organizations strove to maintain quality, and to insist upon fair conditions. But they were often unfair to non-members; and their regulations imposed crippling restraints upon enterprise. In the fifteenth century — often with royal encouragement — men of enterprise were shaking off these restrictions and working out new methods of enriching themselves by meeting new demands.

A man with money at his command could (like Jack of Newbury in England) buy large stocks of wool, give it out to spinners, weavers, fullers and dyers, paying each for his work and fixing the styles they were to follow, and then sell the product through his agents in the best markets. Or he could buy land under which iron was known to exist, hire miners to extract the iron, have it smelted and turned into steel, and perhaps pay skilled craftsmen to work it up into armour and other commodities.

These were the methods of private enterprise or capitalism. They were impossible except to men who commanded substantial resources. No doubt they inflicted hardships upon members of the old 'gilds'. But they cheapened production, and made it more adaptable to changing demand. As yet these new methods were exceptional. They were farthest advanced in Italy, and in some of the towns of South Germany. In England, at any rate, these new methods were scarcely used before the middle of the fifteenth century, and the old, over-regulated, restrictive methods long continued

## EMERGENCE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

alongside of them in all countries. But free enterprise was becoming active as the new era opened. Its ebullient energy, always seeking new openings, was to be the main factor in the coming expansion of European wealth, and of European influence throughout the world. It cannot be questioned that the growing freedom of enterprise enriched civilization by enlarging liberty.

The new methods, in fine, gave opportunities to men of ability and energy, and to some extent opened a career to talent. Some of the capitalists used a part of their growing wealth as bankers — banking, which has been one of the most potent instruments in the development of the modern world, took its rise in this period, though it had been pursued earlier in Italy. By lending large sums to Governments (getting their return when the taxes came in), they could wield an influence often greater than powerful nobles or eminent Churchmen; and men of the middle class were beginning to oust the old feudal ruling class from the practical work of government.

It would be easy to enumerate many instances of men belonging to this new 'bourgeois' class who rose to great power and influence during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: the Medicis in Italy, who made themselves masters of Florence; the Fuggers of Augsburg, woollen merchants, mineowners and bankers, who had kings and princes as their customers; Jacques Coeur of Bourges, whose success in a multitude of enterprises led Louis XI of France to put him in charge of his finances; in England Richard Whittington of London, who helped to finance Henry V's French war, or the Poles, merchants of Hull, whose descendants rose into the highest ranks of the nobility and almost attained to the throne. The great bourgeois merchants of this age were very potent factors in the life of the nation-States. A new force — free wealth earned by free enterprise — was beginning to play its part in the reshaping of the world.

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

There was one momentous invention of this age which could not have reaped its portentous results if capitalist enterprise had not been vigorous. This was the art of printing from movable types. From the first, printing, like the sister industry of paper-making (which developed rapidly in this period) was necessarily a capitalist industry. Only men with wealth at their command could pay for the making of presses, the cutting or casting of large quantities of varied types, the hiring and training of workmen, the laying in of large stocks of paper, and the storage of the printed books until they could be sold.

Although movable types seem to have been used on a small scale as early as 1440, the year 1456, when Johann Gutenberg of Mainz produced an edition of the Vulgate, has been fixed upon as the date of this portentous invention. It spread rapidly over Europe, reaching Italy in 1464, France in 1470, Switzerland in 1472, Spain in 1475 and England in 1476. By the end of the century it is estimated that there were nine million printed books in Europe. The number of manuscripts extant before printing began was probably not more than a hundred thousand.

The invention and the rapid diffusion of printing would by itself have been enough to mark the beginning of a new era. It placed at the disposal of the European peoples an instrument of progress, enlightenment and emancipation of immeasurable value. It made possible the profound and swift influence exercised first by the Renaissance and then by the Reformation. Indeed, all the great movements which have transformed European society and the world during the last five centuries have owed their victory largely to the printing-press; and the modern era may be not inaptly described as the era of printed paper.

## THE RENAISSANCE

### §4 THE RENAISSANCE

Ideas are the most potent force in human life; more potent than political or economic changes or ingenious inventions, though these often give birth to them. The most vital factor in the transition from the medieval to the modern era was the inrush of a flood of new ideas, of new views as to the significance of life and the world, to which the name of the Renaissance or rebirth has been loosely given.

It is commonly said that this rebirth was due to the rediscovery of the ancient world, and to the study of the Latin and Greek classics. That is only a half-truth. The Middle Ages had known and studied the chief Latin classics; some of the greatest Greek literature was known to them, at any rate in Latin translations; and in the fourteenth century the knowledge of Greek itself was spreading. What was new in the fifteenth century was the spirit in which the literatures of the ancient world were studied.

The men of the Middle Ages had read them in the light of that scheme of life, that system of values, which seemed to them irrefragably true. They treated Virgil as a prophet of Christianity; they turned Aristotle into a buttress of the scholastic philosophy; and they never allowed themselves to forget that the great poets and philosophers of the ancient world were, after all, merely pagans, who knew nothing of the truth about human life and destiny as it had been revealed to the Church.

The men of the fifteenth century, on the other hand, belonged to an era in which this certainty had vanished, in which the most venerated institutions and conceptions of the Middle Ages were (as we have seen) being challenged. To a disillusioned generation, the classical writings, when candidly studied, revealed a conception of the life of man, and of the world he lived in, that seemed incomparably nobler, more

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

satisfying and more true than those to which they had been accustomed; and the ideas and ways of life of the Middle Ages appeared to represent a woeful declension from the civilization of the ancient world. In proportion as this belief took possession of men's minds, zeal for the recovery and study of the classical books became more and more powerful.

It was natural that the enthusiasm for the study of the classics should first take hold of Italy, where the traditions of the great past were strongest, and its visible memorials were most numerous and most splendid. Italy, moreover, was the natural place of refuge for scholars from Constantinople as the pressure from the Turks increased. They were coming long before the fall of Constantinople in 1453; Cardinal Bessarion, who settled in Italy about 1440, brought with him no less than eight hundred manuscripts. Moreover, the ideals of the Middle Ages had been more profoundly undermined in Italy than anywhere else; for there the corruptions of the Church were visible at close quarters; feudalism had almost disappeared; capitalism had taken strong root, and the wealth that came from trade and industry overshadowed the old landed aristocracy and provided the patronage that was needed by scholars and artists. In short, the crust of medievalism was already breaking when the ideas of humanism, born of classical studies, came to complete its dissolution.

The enthusiasm for the classics became so great that, for a time, it stopped the development of the great Italian literature that had begun with Dante and Petrarch: the splendour of the great Greeks seemed to dim the ineffectual candles of the moderns. Popes, kings, city despots, wealthy merchants, lavished their money to finance the hunt for manuscripts and the upkeep of the scholars who edited them. The new printing presses were kept busily at work, making the wealth of classical lore accessible to all who could read. In spite of monkish opposition the New Learning rapidly captured the



## THE RENAISSANCE

schools and universities, and established that tradition of exclusively classical learning combined with the worship of physical prowess which long dominated the educational system of western Europe, and notably the English public schools; the heroes of the ancient world displaced the saints as models for youth to imitate.

But the importance of the revival of learning lay not so much in the mere knowledge of the classics which it fostered, as in the Greek view of life and of the world which it revived. Almost all the best minds of Europe were captured by the 'humanist' point of view which they had caught from the Greeks. They no longer admitted the inherent vileness of man, or regarded human reason as an untrustworthy and dangerous instrument. They no longer thought of Nature as an evil force. On the contrary they gloried in the strength and beauty of the human body; they thought of Reason as man's noblest gift, which ought to be fearlessly used in the search for truth; and they thought of truth not as something finally and authoritatively laid down, but as something to be gradually attained by brave and patient search. They thought of the world not as a place of pilgrimage, but as a place of inexhaustible beauty and interest, to be admired, studied, explored, and lovingly reproduced in great works of art. The ideal of self-repression, which medieval men had revered even when they failed to achieve it, seemed to the humanists a false ideal; and they exalted in its place the ideal of self-expression, the fearless development and use of every human faculty.

The humanists were thus claiming freedom of thought, asserting the rights of the individual mind and spirit against the overwhelming weight of traditional authority; and the burgeoning of these ideas from seeds sown centuries before in ancient Greece was a momentous event in the history of humanity. It was, indeed, an intoxicating claim, and it produced a relaxation of moral obligations and a ruthless

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

egoism which are the dark sides of the Renaissance. The most admired quality of the Renaissance Italian was *virtu* — the force of personality impressing itself upon the intractable materials of the artist, and the still more intractable human material of the statesman. Morality had nothing to do with it. Machiavelli's hero, Caesar Borgia, was a man of *virtu* equally with Leonardo or Michelangelo.

It is true that the Italian humanists did not directly challenge the authority of the Church, or its doctrines. They were not interested in such questions; they were content to leave undisturbed the profitable superstitions which they despised. It was a Renaissance pope, Leo X, who exclaimed, 'What profit has not that fable of Christ brought to us!'

It is also true that the humanists did not dream of asserting the liberty of private judgment as something that all men should share. It was fit only to be exercised by men of *virtu*. Humanism was in truth an aristocratic doctrine, limited to the ruling and the cultivated classes; it was still the duty of the mass of men to obey without question the commands of their betters. Nevertheless the humanists had asserted and assumed the right of freedom of thought; they had brought alive again the spirit of free criticism; and the printing-press spread over Europe their ideas and their speculations. From this time onwards this freedom of speculation continued to be cherished in all the more civilized countries, except in the forbidden realms of religion and politics; and even there it could not be wholly quenched.

It is impossible, in a few sentences, to describe the fruits of this great intellectual awakening. They were due, not so much to the direct influence of the classics, as to the new outlook which the study of the classics had created. The most brilliant results were seen in the fine arts, especially in painting, where there were no classical models to be copied. Presently there was seen, in all the western lands, a very remarkable outburst of vernacular literature. It was scarcely

## THE RENAISSANCE

at all due to imitation of the classics. Shakespeare, Rabelais, Cervantes and Ariosto, who were the noblest products of the Renaissance age, owed their inspiration not to classical models, but to the boldness of thought and the freedom of experiment to which humanism gave birth.

In this new world of thought, it was inevitable that there should be fresh thinking about the problems of politics, and about the nature of the bonds which hold men together in society. Machiavelli's *Prince*, which broke away completely from the traditional medieval ideas about the moral basis of States, was in truth the beginning of modern realist analysis of the problems of politics. It came to be regarded as the 'Devil's Bible' of politicians, and its complete divorce of ethics from politics, its toleration of treachery and assassination when used as instruments of politics, shock the modern reader. Yet Machiavelli himself was no cynic. He was a loyal Italian, who had seen his country ruined by the inroads of powerful foreign princes, and longed to see her strengthened so that she might be able to hold her own. His book is an analysis of the way in which strong powers seemed to be built up and held together in the Renaissance age; and the methods of force and fraud, cunning and treachery, which he describes are very fully exemplified in the careers not only of his hero Caesar Borgia but of powerful kings such as Ferdinand of Aragon, Francis I and Henry VIII. They are the expression in politics of the moral laxity and the ruthless egoism of which the Renaissance age presented many examples.

Finally, we may trace to the Renaissance the birth of modern science, and the beginning of the fearless, systematic exploration of the secrets of Nature. The pioneers, such as Copernicus, Vasalius, Kepler and Galileo, no doubt owed much of their stimulus to the rediscovery of what the Greeks had known, and to the study of their methods of inquiry. But when Copernicus proved that the earth revolves round

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

the sun, and when Galileo laid the foundations of the science of dynamics, they had already gone beyond the Greeks; they were no mere reproducers. The gigantic labours which have given to man some understanding of the world in which he lives, and some mastery of its forces, had begun; and this alone would suffice to mark the Renaissance as the beginning of a new era. Prometheus was shaking off his chains.

### § 5 THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

An even greater break with the past than the Renaissance produced was due to the Protestant Reformation. It might well be called the Protestant Revolution, for it shattered the unity of Christendom which the medieval system had maintained. It was as much a political as a religious movement, and it might have brought about a social revolution.

Some writers have treated the Reformation as merely an offshoot or aspect of the Renaissance — an application to the sphere of religion of the spirit of free criticism which humanism had fostered. But this is a very incomplete view of the great upheaval. No doubt the humanists of Germany, the Netherlands, and England contributed to prepare the way for the Reformation. Unlike the humanists of Italy, who had little interest in religion, and had practically relapsed into paganism, such men as Reuchlin and Erasmus, Colet and More devoted their powers to securing sound texts of the Scriptures, and cared more about restoring the pure teachings of Christianity than about recapturing the life of ancient Athens; and all this helped to produce the great revolt. But these gentle scholars hated the idea of revolution. Their work was only a minor factor in bringing it about.

The most remarkable feature of the Reformation was the rapidity with which it transformed the European situation. In 1517 a hitherto unknown friar of peasant

## THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

origin — Martin Luther of the University of Wittenberg — made a protest against the sale of indulgences by affixing a number of theses to a church door. Within less than forty years, half the States of Germany and of Europe had thrown off their hitherto unquestioned allegiance to the Roman Church, and Europe was on the eve of being torn asunder by embittered religious wars, which lasted for a century.

This swift development was due, in the first instance, to the printing-press, which spread the news of Luther's revolt over Germany and over Europe with a rapidity altogether without precedent, and after the publication of his three great pamphlets in 1520 turned him suddenly into a national hero. The rapid spread of the movement was also made possible by the existence of the new middle class, which was open to new ideas, and restive under the exactions of the old regime. But so startling a change could not have come about if Germany and a great part of Europe had not long been ready for it. The Reformation focused a multitude of discontents which had been festering for generations.

There was the resentment of monarchs against the restrictions upon their absolutism which the popes still claimed to impose; if they could add the spiritual to the secular power, their authority would be vastly increased. There was the resentment of both kings and peoples against the enormous proportion of the available wealth which the Church engrossed — it owned something like one-third of the land in most countries, and the exactions which it made by the use of its spiritual powers (for example, by the sale of indulgences) were believed, in some cases, to form a heavier burden than taxation for national purposes. Greed for church lands was the chief motive of many rulers in supporting the Reformation movement. There was the anger almost universal among the middle and lower classes, that was stirred by the contrast between the spiritual pretensions of the clergy and the greed and worldliness of many

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

of them; for centuries not only heretics but leaders of the Church of unquestioned orthodoxy had denounced this source of corruption. There was a widespread longing, especially in the middle and lower classes, for a purer and simpler faith. Editions of the Bible in several vernaculars were already in circulation, and had been widely diffused by the printers, and the remarkable output of works of simple piety and devotion which marked the generation before the Reformation began is proof of this longing. There was a distaste for the severity with which harmless heresies were suppressed by the Inquisition; in many parts of Europe there had long been groups of people who cherished beliefs of their own, but were kept silent by fear. Finally, there were in many countries, but especially in Germany, deep discontent among the peasantry, which found expression, time and again, in hopeless risings, cruelly suppressed; and the idea that, if the ill-used wealth of the Church were used for the relief of the poor, most of the existing social evils would disappear was widely held among the peasantry. In short, there was a universal ferment, tending towards revolution; and the bold revolts of Luther in Germany, of Zwingli in Switzerland, of Lefebvre and Farel in France (all of which were almost simultaneous) set the spark to this train of explosives.

When in 1520 Luther committed to the flames the pope's bull of excommunication, and with it the whole body of Canon (or Church) law; when in the same year he issued three pamphlets that repudiated the existing Church system; and when in 1521, summoned to appear before the emperor and his Diet, he defied all these potentates, and was put to the ban, he had raised a banner of revolution which was eagerly acclaimed, not in Germany alone. But could he control the revolution he had started? Had he any clear idea what should be substituted for the elaborate system he was overthrowing?

## THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

He proclaimed the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without priestly mediation; and this implied a direct relation between God and each individual soul. He repudiated the authority which the Church claimed over the minds and souls of men, and set up the Bible as the sole authority. But who was to interpret the Bible? The Church also recognized the supreme authority of the Bible, but claimed to be its divinely guided interpreter. Did Luther mean to claim for every man the right of interpreting the Bible for himself, the right of private judgment? That, it would seem, was the logical consequence of Protestantism. But Luther recoiled from so revolutionary a conclusion. There must be a final authority somewhere. Luther decided that this final authority must rest with the ruling prince in each State; and thereby ensured for himself the support of many of the princes, who saw their absolutism strengthened, and the wealth of the Church put at their mercy. But this conclusion, if it ensured the secular triumph of the Lutheran cause, ensured also its spiritual decay.

Then the peasants of south Germany broke into rebellion, inspired by the hope of great changes. And the more extreme Protestants, who later became known as Anabaptists, roused the mobs in favour of extreme courses, even in Luther's own Wittenberg. Alarmed by these things, Luther fell back into Conservatism; he denounced unsparingly both peasants and Anabaptists, and to his eternal shame called upon the princes to smite and slay without mercy the peasants with whom he had at first sympathized, and to whose stock he belonged.

Lutheranism became a princely and political religion, the faith of despotism, not of freedom. It won the allegiance not only of powerful German princes, but of the kings of Denmark and Sweden, who were glad to destroy the authority of the Church in their realms, and to annex its wealth. The German princes who upheld the Lutheran

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

faith were strong enough to hold their own against the Emperor Charles V; and, after many confused negotiations and some fighting, they were able to secure an agreement at the Peace of Augsburg (1555), whereby the religious conflict was settled on the basis of *curus regio eius religio*, which means the right of each prince to settle the faith of his subjects. Germany was left, and has ever since remained, half Protestant and half Catholic.

Meanwhile, in England, Henry VIII had brought about a breach with Rome which strengthened his own power, enabled him to seize the property of the monasteries, and made him Head of the Church. Though Henry was no Lutheran, but remained, in doctrine, a Catholic, his methods were very like those of the German princes; and Anglicanism, like Lutheranism, was — at any rate in its beginnings — a political and a princely faith; the royal reformer impartially executed both Catholics and Protestants if they threatened to undermine his authority.

Meanwhile, however, the torch of the Protestant Revolt had been taken up by a firmer and a stronger hand than Luther's. The clear-headed and logical John Calvin, exiled from his native France, became the guide, and presently the master, of the small Swiss city of Geneva, where he worked out, both in theory and in practice, the doctrine and discipline of a new and more unflinching type of protestantism. He met Luther's dilemma as to where authority lay when the supremacy of the pope was overthrown, not by surrendering to the lay power, but by asserting the supremacy of the Reformed Church, which he upheld as firmly as ever Gregory VII or Innocent III had upheld that of Rome. That was what Milton meant when he said that 'new presbyter was but old priest, writ large'. Moreover, Calvin gave to his Reformed Church a form of government more democratic than anything, lay or ecclesiastical, that had yet been seen in the modern world. Each congregation,



## THE UNVEILING OF THE WORLD

each district, each national church, was to be controlled by an elected body, including laymen as well as clerics. The system was wrought out first in France and then in Scotland; but it was in accordance with Calvin's ideas. And it had, in Calvin's own writings, a creed harder, clearer and more dogmatic than the old Church ever possessed, at any rate until the Council of Trent (1543-62) drew clear lines between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Calvinism was an assured and dogmatic faith. It was a persecuting faith. But there was iron in it. It became the fighting creed of Protestantism, wherever its existence was challenged; in France, in the Netherlands, in Scotland, among the more ardent reformers in England, in Hungary, in Poland, and in some parts of Germany. All through the troublous years of the mid-century, Geneva remained the refuge and the hearth of militant Protestantism.

What contribution had the Reformation made to the civilization and to the liberties of Europe? It had shattered beyond repair the unity of Christendom. In the name of religion, it had brought into Europe 'not peace, but a sword'. But it had raised the banner of freedom of belief, however much obscured this might be by the compromises and the dogmatisms of the Reformers. And, in its Calvinist form, it had created a democratic system which was later to have profound effects in the political sphere. More than any other single factor, it had brought to an end the medieval system of life and thought, and set western civilization upon a new pilgrimage, the destined end of which could only be freedom of belief, of thought and of speech.

## §6 THE UNVEILING OF THE WORLD

One more aspect of the change from the medieval to the modern remains to be noted. The great geographical

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

explorations of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries enlarged, to an incredible degree, the area of the known world. It was as if, by the sudden raising of a curtain, illimitable new horizons were revealed. The arena of modern history was to be vastly greater than the narrow stage of medieval history. Wide fields were opened to the rivalries of the new national States, and to the enterprise of the new capitalist middle class. The Mediterranean ceased to be the sea of western civilization; Britain ceased to lie on the outer verge of the known world, and found herself in what was to be the main channel of world-intercourse. If there had been no other sign of the passage into a new era, this would have been enough to mark it.

Like the other great changes we have been surveying, this geographical revolution had its roots far in the past. Europe had known of the wealth of the East, and used its products, throughout the medieval period, but especially since the First Crusade had opened the trade routes upon which the wealth of Venice and Genoa was built. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the daring European travellers Carpini, Rubruquis and above all Marco Polo, had given to the West some knowledge of China and of India. Then came the conquests of the Turks, which impeded the familiar routes of sailors and caravans; and men began to wonder whether there was any means whereby this obstacle could be outflanked.

Meanwhile the Portuguese, having completed the expulsion of the Moors from their territory, were driven by the crusading spirit to pursue them down the coast of Africa. At this point the revival of classical learning supplied them with a fresh incentive; it became known that Herodotus had recorded that the Phoenicians had circumnavigated Africa. This suggested a new road to the East, and the Portuguese, not satisfied with the savage wealth of Guinea, pushed their explorations down the barren western coast of Africa, until

## THE UNVEILING OF THE WORLD

in 1487 Bartholomew Diaz reached the Cape of Good Hope; and the route to India, which was followed ten years later by Vasco da Gama, was open.

Classical knowledge had also taught men that the earth was a globe, and had suggested that the East might be more directly reached by sailing due west. It was on this assumption that Columbus set forth, financed by Spain, and with the help of the trade wind made a landfall in the West Indies; three voyages did not convince him that he had not reached the fabled Orient. More stingily financed by England, the Cabots reached the coast of North America; and the main ocean routes to the New World were opened.

It is impossible to imagine the thrill which these discoveries gave to the imagination of Europe; a new era was indeed and visibly beginning. To whom should these vast opportunities belong? The Pope, still the accepted arbiter, in 1493 divided the unknown world between Spain and Portugal.

During the next half-century an amazing energy of exploration disclosed the magnitude and importance of these revelations. The Portuguese created a naval domination in the Indian Ocean, planted their trading stations on the coasts of Africa and India, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, and in the far East Indian archipelago. The daring navigators and conquistadores of Spain mapped out Central and South America, found their way across the Isthmus to the Pacific, conquered Mexico and Peru with their apparently inexhaustible supplies of wealth, and built up a vast empire in lands which no European had ever known; while Magellan circumnavigated the globe (1519-22).

In a single generation the main features of the Old World and the New had been revealed. Never was such a transformation — a transformation in the scale and character of human affairs. The Reformation had its influence in determining the use that was to be made of these dazzling

## CIVILIZATION MAKES A FRESH START

opportunities. By dethroning the pope, in the view of half Europe, from his long-accepted authority as the supreme arbiter, it deprived his division of the world between Spain and Portugal of its authority, and invited other nations to play their part.

Thus, in many ways, the character of European history was undergoing a great change during this momentous century. New powers, whose strength was doubled by the sentiment of nationality, had emerged upon the stage of history; a powerful new class, exercising free enterprise and using the power of capital, was beginning to elbow the older ruling classes from the centre of the stage; the printing-press was beginning its portentous work; the ideas of humanism were vaunting the powers of human reason; scientific investigation was afoot; the old order in Church and State was breaking up; men were claiming freedom from the intellectual and spiritual authority which had hitherto bound them; and for all these great new forces a gigantic new arena had been provided by the opening up of the world.

## CHAPTER VI

### AN ERA OF CONFUSION, 1550-1660

CHANGES in men's ideas and ways of life so profound as those which the century from 1450 to 1550 produced could not but be followed by confusion. The next hundred years were filled with wars, which are generally called the Wars of Religion. They were much more than wars of religion. They were the outcome of an attempt to restore the old order, and they completed its destruction. They were wars of nationality. They were wars between despotism and liberty. During their course there was in several countries an unexampled ferment of political thought. During their course, also, there was a very remarkable activity in the expansion of European influence into the new world and the old.

When the wars came to an end, and largely as a result of their influence, political despotism had been established in almost every European country, and was regarded as the only efficient form of government. But in two countries on the western fringe of the European continent — England and Holland — and also in the colonies which England had planted in the new world, political liberty had been established; and, mainly because of their freedom, Holland was enjoying, and England was beginning to enjoy, a prosperity which none of the much more powerful despotic States could rival.

#### § I SPANISH DESPOTISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The period opened with a revival of Catholicism, which had hitherto been impotent to resist the rapid spread of

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

Protestantism. In 1542 the Emperor Charles V had summoned a great Church Council, at Trent, in the hope of bringing about a reconciliation between the two faiths. As the long and often interrupted sessions of the Council dragged on — they lasted until 1563 — it became more and more obvious that reconciliation was impossible; and in its last sessions the Council defined the doctrines of the Church in such a way that the breach became final and incurable. Catholicism (which means Universalism) had become Roman Catholicism.

To ensure fidelity to the faith thus defined, an *index expurgatorius* of forbidden books was established, and the Inquisition became more active, especially in Spain. The Council also carried out valuable reforms, which removed many of the abuses that had weakened the Church; and there was new zeal among many of the leaders of the Church. The Jesuit order, which had been founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1539, spread its activities over all Europe, and indeed over the world, displaying a wonderful missionary heroism; and, through the admirable educational system which it developed, it set itself to win the enthusiasm of youth, and largely succeeded.

Catholicism and Protestantism, Conservatism and revolution were now arrayed against one another; and Catholicism seemed to have the advantage, because it was now united and resolute, whereas the Protestants were divided between Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anglicans. It had the advantage, also, in the fact that the two most powerful nation-States in Europe, Spain and France, were both Catholic. They had made peace in 1559, and if they could have combined forces, they might have ousted Protestantism. They could not combine, however, because their national rivalry was too acute. When a long series of civil wars began in 1563 between the Catholics and the Protestants of France, every suggestion of intervention by Spain on the Catholic side did

## SPANISH DESPOTISM—CONSEQUENCES

more harm than good to the Catholic cause, because it aroused the national spirit.

The leadership on the Catholic side therefore fell to Philip II of Spain. But, loyal son of the Church though he was, Philip was no universalist; he did not desire to restore the old authority of the Papacy, except in religious matters; in his own country he kept the Church firmly under his control, and used the Inquisition largely as a means of enforcing his political power. Both in Spain and in France, Nationalism had in fact defeated Universalism; and even if the Catholic cause had been victorious, no return to the theocratic ideas of the Middle Ages would have been possible.

Beyond all rivalry, Spain under Philip was the greatest and most formidable power in the western world. Her soldiers were reputed to be the best in Europe. But Philip's power was by no means limited to Spain. Directly or indirectly he was the master of Italy. He also controlled the prosperous Netherlands, the southern part of which (modern Belgium) was the richest manufacturing country in Europe. He commanded the wealth of the Indies, whence a constant stream of the precious metals poured into his coffers. After 1580, when he annexed Portugal, he also enjoyed all the wealth that came from the eastern trade. And he added naval to military supremacy. At Lepanto (1571) his fleets overthrew the hitherto irresistible naval power of the Turks in the Mediterranean; and he owned all the great ships that plied across the Atlantic. He seemed to be irresistible. And, since he identified the cause of the Church with his own power, if he had won the victory which he was expected to win, he would not only have destroyed Protestantism, he would have established the domination of a single power over Europe.

In his own dominions Philip was the most unqualified despot that Europe had yet seen. The Spanish Cortes,

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

which had once led Europe in the establishment of political liberty, now counted for nothing; the will of the king was law. Spain had not been seriously infected with the ideas of the Reformers. But Philip made doubly sure by using ruthlessly the terrors of the Spanish Inquisition against all who were even suspected of heresy; they were used also against any who resisted or offended the king. *Autos-da-fé*, or public burnings of heretics, kept all who were tempted to dangerous thoughts in a state of terror, and any freedom of thought was treated as heresy. The same principles of religious and political absolutism governed his administration of his other lands, and especially of the Spanish Empire in the new world. Heresy and freedom of thought were rigidly suppressed. Even the trade between Spain and her dominions was kept under close royal control.

What were the results? The denial of all liberty condemned Spain to intellectual stagnation, and therefore to decay: to this day she has not recovered. Even the riches of the vast Spanish Empire could not save her from a rapid economic decline; the Spanish dominions in the new world fell into a stagnancy from which they did not begin to recover till the nineteenth century, when stagnation was succeeded by the anarchy that is the natural sequel of despotism. When Philip II died in 1598, the brief era of Spanish ascendancy was already at an end, and by 1648 Spain had sunk to the rank of a second-rate power.

The results of Spanish domination in Italy were equally disastrous. The brilliant efflorescence of intellectual life which had distinguished the previous period gradually withered. It was in this period, for example, that Galileo was imprisoned, and forced to recant the 'heresy' that the earth rotated on its own axis and revolved round the sun. Italy, like Spain, gradually fell into a condition of stagnancy from which she did not recover until the nineteenth century.

Such are the consequences of unqualified despotism, and



## FERMENT OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

of the suppression of freedom of thought. Such was the fate that might have befallen other European countries if they had not plucked up their courage to resist what seemed overwhelming power.

From this fate Europe was saved by the heroic resistance of the Dutch, against overwhelming odds, under William the Silent; and by the gallantry of the English sailors who, having trained themselves by daring raids into the *penetralia* of the Spanish Empire, succeeded in defeating the proud Armada (1588).

The Dutch war of independence, which is one of the most heroic episodes of European history, brought into existence a new free State, which for a century and a half played a part in European affairs out of all proportion to its resources; and the creative power of freedom was displayed by its brilliant achievements, on which we shall later have more to say. The defeat of the great Armada opened the seas of the world to the sailors and merchants of all countries. It was followed by the proudest period of English literature: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe, Bacon, Hooker were all inspired, in a single generation, by the pride of a nation that had successfully defended its freedom against overweening power. As despotism led to decadence in Spain, freedom led to a glorious efflorescence of civilization in Holland and in England.

## § 2 A FERMENT OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

In France, meanwhile, no less than nine successive wars were fought between the Protestants (or Huguenots) and the Catholics. The Huguenots were numerically by far the weaker party; but they were too strong to be crushed, because they drew their support from among the energetic and enterprising middle class of traders and manufacturers,

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

and the warlike lesser nobles, while the strength of the Catholics lay among the peasantry and the Paris mob. In the end, the Protestant leader, Henry of Navarre (Henry IV) succeeded to the crown; the party of *politiques* — Catholics who put the strength and unity of the country above religious victory — gave him their support. To give peace to France, Henry became a Catholic; but he also issued, in 1598, the Edict of Nantes, whereby freedom of conscience was secured to all Huguenots, and freedom of worship in certain places; as a guarantee, a number of fortresses were handed over to them.

This implied a recognition of the fact that peace and national unity could only be obtained by compromise. It was the nearest approach to religious toleration that Europe had yet seen — a much nearer approach than the German solution whereby each prince was empowered to determine the religion of his subjects. As we shall see in the next chapter, it was to last for less than a century, for despotism does not willingly consort with toleration. But while it lasted it gave to France a real degree of prosperity and religious peace.

The wars of religion gave rise to a great deal of searching discussion on fundamental political problems; and the discussion was more active in France than in other countries, because the very existence of the French nation seemed to be at stake. Might a minority resist the State when it believed the State to be in the wrong? If so, might not the very existence of organized society be imperilled? Was religious unity essential, as western Europe had hitherto believed? Could society hold together if its members held violently opposed opinions upon the most fundamental questions? These were problems which could not but exercise men's minds while the civil wars raged.

In the early stages of the conflict, when the Protestant minority were fighting for their very existence against the

## FERMENT OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Government which was responsible for the dreadful Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day (1572), Protestant writers laid great emphasis upon the limitations that ought to be imposed upon the power of rulers. They argued that, under the historical constitution of France, the power of the king was limited by the powers of other organs of State, such as the States-General. They maintained that every king held his power under an implied contract with his people, which would be broken by misgovernment, and that the people had the right and duty of resistance to a king who defied the laws of God.

But when the Protestant leader became, by hereditary succession, the legitimate king, the Huguenots ceased to insist upon the right of resistance. It was now the extreme Catholics who, putting their loyalty to the Church above their loyalty to the State, took up the argument for freedom. They revived the accepted doctrines of the Middle Ages, and of great teachers such as St. Thomas Aquinas. They argued, as he had done, that all governments derive their authority from the people's assent, and must be conceived as holding their power by a contract with the people, on condition of giving good government. Peoples and governments alike, they contended, are subject to the 'law of nature', which is, indeed, the law of God implanted in the hearts of men. And they claimed that it was the function of the Church and the Papacy to interpret the 'law of nature', and, if it was broken, to absolve peoples from the obligation of obedience to their rulers.

Thus Protestants and Catholics in turn promulgated ideas, inherited from the Middle Ages, which were, in the long run, to give birth to the theories and institutions of democracy. As yet, however, these ideas were propounded only by rebels against authority. They were not generally accepted. The school of thought which had the deepest influence, not only in France but in other countries, was that which taught

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

that absolute authority was indispensable for the health and even for the existence of the State. At a moment when society seemed to be on the verge of dissolution these conclusions were almost irresistible.

The ablest exponent of these doctrines was the *politique* philosopher, Jean Bodin, whose book, *The Republic*, issued in 1577, was the first systematic treatise on political science since Aristotle. Bodin's chief contribution to political thought was the doctrine of 'sovereignty', of which he was the initiator. His doctrine was taken up in the seventeenth century by the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, who developed it with extraordinary cogency and clarity: Hobbes, like Bodin, had seen society brought to the verge of dissolution, in the English civil war. Down to our own time, this doctrine has been accepted as one of the axioms of political thought; it is only in our own day that it has been seriously questioned.

In every State, Bodin and Hobbes contended, there must be an ultimate, supreme, sovereign authority, whose power cannot be divided, alienated or limited by any other authority, internal or external. It must be above law, because it makes law; and upon the existence of this power the survival of the State depends.

No doubt this sovereign power is subject to the 'natural' or moral law; but there is no way of enforcing its obedience. 'Civil' law, as distinct from 'natural' law, derives its authority entirely from the sovereign power which enforces it. There are many things which it would be unwise or impracticable for the sovereign power to enforce. Bodin himself thought that, in the circumstances of his time, religious uniformity ought not to be enforced, although the State would be stronger if that were possible.

In theory the sovereign power in a State might be a representative democratic body; and this has made it possible for democrats to accept the doctrine of sovereignty,

## FERMENT OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

which has never been more unflinchingly expounded than by the Radical John Austin early in the nineteenth century. But in practice the doctrine of sovereignty became a doctrine of absolute monarchy; it helped to make absolute monarchy the normal form of government in every European country except Britain, Holland, Switzerland and Poland; and the decay of Poland owing to the impotence of the Polish crown seemed to prove the case.

The doctrine of State sovereignty implied the final repudiation of the ideals of the Middle Ages. It had two aspects. On the one hand it asserted the unlimited power, within the State, of the 'sovereign', however constituted. Medieval theory had always insisted upon the limitation of sovereign power by the rights of other elements in the community. And, in truth, the medieval theory was closer to the actual facts of social life than the theory of Bodin and his followers. In every State there are forces too powerful to be over-ridden by the 'sovereign', forces which draw their strength from sources independent of the 'sovereign', such as Churches or (more recently) Trade Unions. Where, in any State, State idolatry has been carried to such a pitch that no force of this kind is permitted to enjoy any degree of independence (as in the France of Louis XIV, or, more fully, in the Germany of Hitler), that State is in a perilous condition. In actual fact, States have been great and prosperous which had no recognizable 'sovereign' such as Bodin's theory postulated: one example was provided, as we shall see, by the Dutch Republic; another, later, by the United States of America. The doctrine of sovereignty does not correspond with the facts.

On the other hand, Bodin's doctrine implied that no power outside of the State could restrict or limit its authority, and that therefore it must always be judge in its own cause. The Middle Ages had always held that the moral law is binding upon all States, and that there ought to be a recog-

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

nized authority capable of enforcing it. Here, again, the doctrine of sovereignty is too sweeping. States have in fact always been to some extent restrained by fear of the moral condemnation of the world; and when they have disregarded this fear, when they have treated the most solemn agreements and treaties as mere scraps of paper, they have found that they have embarked upon a course that leads them to ruin. It is this aspect of the doctrine of 'sovereignty', declaring the irresponsibility of States to the moral judgment of mankind, which has wrought the greatest mischief, from Bodin's day to our own.

Although the doctrine of sovereignty as preached by Bodin and Hobbes was almost universally accepted, the contrary set of ideas continued to influence many minds. Internal sovereignty, especially as identified with absolute monarchy, was successfully challenged by the course of events in England and Scotland during the seventeenth century. External sovereignty, implying the absence of any external control over the actions of the State, was challenged by the development of International Law, and the promulgation of successive plans for the establishment of an international authority capable of performing the functions once performed by the Papacy.

Since the moral authority of the Papacy had broken down, the new absolute monarchs recognized no superior capable of enforcing moral restrictions upon them, and held themselves justified in using every weapon, treachery, treaty-breaking, assassination, wholesale massacres. But men have always found it impossible to believe that the law of the jungle must always be the only law for States and their masters. They felt that Europe must somehow provide herself with a substitute for the moral leadership of the medieval Papacy, some means of preserving peace and imposing limits upon the ruthless greed and cruelty of rulers.

The first project of this kind came from an eminent

## FERMENT OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

statesman, the Duc de Sully, First Minister of Henry IV of France. After his master's death in 1610, Sully wrote in retirement a book of memoirs, in which he asserted that Henry had formed a Grand Design which he wanted all Europe to adopt, whereby all the States were to be grouped together in a common organization to maintain peace and international justice. Probably this scheme was the offspring of Sully's own brain; but the fact that a statesman of his eminence and experience should have entertained a project which implied a limitation of the sovereignty of all States shows how uneasy thinking men were about the state of anarchy into which Europe had fallen.

The Grand Design came to nothing. But it was the first of a series of such projects which appeared in the next three centuries. The latest of them, and the first to be actually established by international agreement, was the League of Nations. Whatever Bodin and Hobbes might say, the intelligence and conscience of civilized Europe revolted against the implications of unlimited State sovereignty, and longed to see it restricted.

The same sense of helplessness in the face of anarchy brought about the birth of the system of International Law. Although he had predecessors, the real founder of this new science was the Dutch jurist, Hugo Grotius, whose classical book, *De Jure Belli et Pacis*, was published in 1625. As its title indicates, the range of the book was narrow. But it endeavoured to show that *some* common rules were generally accepted, by codifying existing usages. Like the medieval jurists and philosophers, he drew upon the philosophical theory of the Law of Nature, and upon the Roman *jus gentium*; and he laid down the principle that all States must be treated as equals — not, of course, equals in power, but equals in the right to just treatment. The system which he founded was expanded by later writers, such as Pufendorf, Leibniz, Bynkershoek and Vattel, all of whom (it is worth

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

noting) came from the smaller States of Europe which felt most keenly the need for international law. It is a remarkable fact that this system of international law, though never endorsed by any international legislation, was well observed until our own day, and was enforced in the courts of the nations.

International law went but a very small way towards curing the European anarchy. But its creation and its acceptance afforded evidence that the results of unqualified State sovereignty were deplored by some of the best minds in Europe. Indeed, national freedom, to which so high a value was now attached, could never be secure until it was brought under the protection of international law, since liberty is always dependent upon law.

### § 3 THE RESULTS OF FREEDOM IN HOLLAND

In the foregoing pages we have been considering the effects of the wars of religion which filled the second half of the sixteenth century — the despotism of Philip II, and its ruinous results for Spain and Italy; the winning of their freedom by the Dutch people; the chaos of civil war in France, and the ferment of political thought to which it led; the establishment of the doctrine of State sovereignty, and the ineffectual reaction against it.

The era of confusion did not end with the sixteenth century. In the first half of the seventeenth century there were four series of events which had a profoundly important influence upon the development of western civilization, and upon the growth of liberty. Firstly, the Dutch war against Spain went on until 1648, though Dutch independence was already secure. This was indeed the Golden Age of Dutch history, and displayed the vitalizing influence of liberty in a remarkable way. Secondly, Germany, which had enjoyed an uneasy



## RESULTS OF FREEDOM IN HOLLAND

peace since 1555, was involved in the most terrible of all the wars of religion; it ended in the ruin of what had been a rich and happy country. In the third place England and Scotland were drawn into a conflict which was partly religious and partly political; its result was to make political liberty secure in England. Finally, the peoples of western Europe planted, in this period, their varying types of civilization in the New World, and England, in particular, laid the foundations of the future free democracy of America. All these events, but perhaps especially the third, contributed in an important degree to the development both of civilization and of liberty, and therefore deserve our attention.

Already, before 1600, though war was still raging, the seven United Provinces of the northern Netherlands had become the greatest trading nation in Europe. The southern Netherlands (modern Belgium) remained under the deadening despotism of Spain. They had been far richer and more important than their northern neighbours; but they lost most of their trade, and commercial supremacy passed from Antwerp to Amsterdam.

The well-being of the United Provinces was certainly not due to their possession of an efficient sovereign Government such as Bodin held to be essential. Their constitution was a negation of all Bodin's theories. For they were a loose federation of seven provinces, each of which claimed independent sovereignty; and the governing body of each province consisted of Estates elected by the close oligarchies of the towns, which in their turn resented any interference with their affairs. The only common authority was the States-General, consisting of delegates from each of the provinces; but it had little effective power, and the provincial Estates often refused to obey its edicts. Some contribution to unity was provided by the leadership of the Princes of Orange, who had earned the gratitude of the whole nation by their services. But they were far from being monarchs.

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

They were usually Stadholders or Governors of most (not all) of the provinces; and in war they were appointed Admirals-general of the fleet and Captains-general of the army. But the dominating influence, especially in the realm of finance, was wielded by the rich burghers of the province of Holland, which provided more than half the total revenue; and between them and the Princes of Orange there was often acute rivalry and distrust.

In short, it was impossible to say where the 'sovereign power' which Bodin regarded as essential actually resided. The amazing thing is that this system worked at all: only their common passion for their hard-won liberties held the provinces together. The really dominant element in the United Provinces, and especially in Holland, consisted of the new middle class of merchants and traders. It was their energy and enterprise which, in a few years, turned the United Provinces into the supreme maritime and commercial power in the world, made Amsterdam the commercial metropolis of Europe, and created, at the expense of the Portuguese, a powerful trade-empire, the richest part of which survives till this day.

The one virtue of this ill-organized system of government was that it encouraged freedom, because there was no power capable of restricting it, and also because the controlling middle class was on the whole enlightened and tolerant. The rigid Calvinists, indeed, succeeded for a time in getting their faith declared the religion of the State; but they were never strong enough to crush out other forms of Protestantism or even Roman Catholicism. Soon complete freedom of worship was in practice secured; and there was also freedom of speech and of the Press. The United Provinces were, in fact, in the seventeenth century, the only country in the world where unqualified intellectual liberty existed.

The result was that they became a place of refuge for the persecuted of all countries; and, since those who are willing

## THE RUIN OF GERMANY

to make sacrifices for their beliefs are commonly men of high quality, their coming greatly enriched the Provinces. Flemings fled from the oppression of Spain in the southern Netherlands, Frenchmen from the intolerance of both parties, exiled Jews from Spain and Portugal, Puritans who would not submit to Laud in England; and they brought their crafts with them. The two greatest philosophers of the age made their homes in Holland, because there they found the atmosphere in which they could think freely: Descartes, the great Frenchman, spent the twenty best years of his life in Holland, and wrote his greatest books there; Spinoza, though Dutch born, was the son of refugee Portuguese Jews, and his daring and profound speculations could not have been published anywhere but in Holland. In the arts also this was the age of Dutch supremacy. Rembrandt, one of the world's masters, was only the greatest among a score of famous painters who won for Holland the pre-eminence in the arts that had belonged to Italy, where the arts were decaying in an atmosphere of servitude.

In short, liberty gave to the United Provinces not only supremacy in wealth and trade, and a political importance wholly out of proportion to their size; it gave to them also, for the best part of a century, the leadership of European thought and art.

### § 4 THE RUIN OF GERMANY

While the United Provinces, which had been part of the German Kingdom, and, indeed remained so in name until 1648, were enjoying their Golden Age, Germany as a whole was undergoing the long torture of the last, the bitterest and the longest of the religious wars. The Thirty Years War began with the refusal of the ancient Czech Kingdom of Bohemia to accept the rule of the Habsburgs of Austria: the

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

countrymen of John Huss preferred to have a Protestant king, and elected a Calvinist prince of south Germany. But they were soon overthrown; and the Czechs entered upon three hundred years of subjection during which they were held down by a German minority in their own country.

From Bohemia the war passed into Germany, all of whose petty princes were gradually involved. Other countries joined in the fray: England, the United Provinces, Spain, Denmark, Sweden and France; while military adventurers, such as Mansfeld, Wallenstein and Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, raised mercenary armies that lived on plunder, and strove to carve out principalities for themselves. Germany had been a prosperous and civilized country until this disaster fell upon her, but the ravages of war reduced her to penury; the distress was so terrible that cannibalism was not unknown. Never had any European country been so desolated and impoverished; never had war shown itself in a more barbarous guise. And all these evils could be attributed to the fact that Germany lacked a strong national monarchy. Her sufferings provided a powerful argument for centralized government.

When this dismal conflict was brought to an end by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Germany was not only exhausted, she was more disunited than ever. In the north the United Provinces and in the south Switzerland were recognized as independent States; France had taken territory from her in the west; Sweden had taken more on the Baltic coast, and controlled the outlets of two of the great German rivers, as the United Provinces controlled the outlet of the Rhine. The main area of Germany was divided among more than three hundred princelings, only a few of whom were powerful enough to play a part of any importance in European affairs. All of them were despots, and their petty courts were played upon by the rivalries of the greater European powers. Germany had no independent life of her

## PURITAN REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

own. This was the dreadful penalty which she paid for disunion; and the disunion lasted until it was cured by the high-handed policy of Bismarck. During those two centuries Germany was condemned to be the field of the rivalries and wars of the great nation-States.

The Thirty Years War, beginning as a local conflict upon religious and political issues, had developed into something like a general European War; and the Conference of Westphalia, which brought it to an end, was the first general peace conference. It declared that its own decisions formed part of the public law of Europe; and in recognizing that there was such a thing as a 'public law of Europe' it went some way to meet the contentions of the international lawyers. But this declaration also appeared to make the maintenance of German disintegration the concern of all the countries of Europe.

The ruin and disorganization of one of the great European peoples was one of the worst consequences of this era of confusion. It bequeathed to the future a heritage of unrest.

### § 5 THE PURITAN REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

Of all the conflicts to which this era of confusion gave rise, the most momentous was the political and religious strife which tore England, Scotland and Ireland asunder in the first half of the seventeenth century. It brought about a civil war, though there was no such ferocity as marked the wars in the Netherlands, in France and in Germany. It demonstrated that force is no remedy. But in the end it led to the establishment of the first organized system of constitutional government that the modern world had yet seen. For that reason it is of momentous importance in the history both of civilization and of liberty; and although the

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

story is a very familiar one to English readers, we must survey it once more from the point of view of this book.

No country was more deeply affected by the Reformation than Scotland; its character and destiny were transformed by the new mould which John Knox and Andrew Melville imposed upon them. The Scottish Kirk, and the Scottish people, were remodelled in accordance with the teachings of Calvin. The Kirk was as intolerant, and as exacting in its claims, as Rome had ever been. But its organization was more democratic than any that had yet existed in the world, political or religious; and, as the Scottish Parliament had never enjoyed any real power, the Kirk gave to the people a national organization such as it had hitherto never known. In every parish, in every district, and in the nation as a whole, there were governing bodies in which clergy and laity sat together; and one of the first-fruits of the new order was an educational system far in advance of anything that existed elsewhere in Europe.

The king, James VI, who united the two crowns when in 1603 he became James I of England, deeply resented the impotence to which the Kirk reduced him. He was enamoured of the now fashionable doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings. He hoped, when he succeeded to the wealth and power of Elizabethan England, to have his revenge upon these proud presbyters; and during his reign as King of England he went far to impose upon the Scottish Kirk the episcopal system which alone seemed to him to be congruent with monarchy.

But in coming to England James was coming to a country in which the habits of self-government were deeply implanted, and in which, therefore, Divine Right was not likely to be easily accepted. Not only was there a Parliament which, even under the Tudors, had retained control over legislation and all exceptional taxation. In the absence of a bureaucracy the detailed administration of the country was in the hands

## PURITAN REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

of unpaid country gentlemen, acting as justices of the peace. In two hundred boroughs corporations managed their own affairs. In every parish the vestry dealt with many matters including the administration of poor relief; and in every Common Law trial a jury of private citizens had the determining voice. In no country of the world was the habit of settling common affairs by discussion so deeply ingrained as in England; as was shown by the almost automatic way in which Englishmen set up self-governing institutions whenever they settled in a new land.

Parliament and the people had, it is true, been very ready to leave to the trusted Tudor sovereigns the control of high affairs of State — foreign policy, Church policy, and the regulation of foreign trade. But in the later years even of the great Queen Elizabeth, it had begun to be troublesome, though it was restrained by its deep respect and affection for her. It was unlikely to be so submissive to a foreign king who came proclaiming the doctrine of his own Divine Right, and asserting that even Parliament's own ancient privileges were enjoyed only by his grace.

Moreover, even under Elizabeth, there had been a growing dissatisfaction with the ecclesiastical system which seemed to James so admirable an improvement on that of Scotland, and these views were strongest in the richest part of the country, London and the south-east. There was a widespread tendency to what was called 'Puritanism', a distrust of forms and ceremonies; and this became more common when the publication of the Authorized Version of the Bible in 1611 put the Scriptures into the hands of all.

It was therefore inevitable that there should be a clash between Divine Right monarchy, backed by episcopacy, on the one hand, and, on the other, the rising claim of Parliament to exercise some control over the whole range of national policy, reinforced by Puritanism. Throughout the reign of James I and the early years of his son Charles I this conflict

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

went on growing. Parliament insisted upon trying to impose its views on foreign policy, to criticize the king's ecclesiastical policy, and to exercise control over the customary trade revenues which had always been granted to the king for the period of his reign. Reviving an old practice, it 'impeached' ministers of the crown, and compelled the dismissal of a lord chancellor and a lord treasurer. Led by the lawyers, who were a very important element in its membership, it declared that the king was bound by the Common Law, which he could not alter. It even declared, in a resolution which the king angrily tore from the records with his own hand, that all affairs concerning king and realm and church were proper subjects for counsel and debate in Parliament. When the controversy reached its height in 1628, Parliament forced Charles I to accept a Petition of Right in which it was laid down that taxation without the assent of Parliament, imprisonment or other punishment without a regular trial, and other recent activities of the crown, were illegal; they made a vehement protest against the religious policy which the king was pursuing, and condemned recent promotions in the Church; and, when the king ordered a dissolution, they forcibly held the Speaker in his chair while they passed a Protest declaring that everybody who countenanced 'innovations in religion', or levied or paid the ancient customary duties on trade without a parliamentary grant, was an enemy of the State.

After this, the king resolved to govern without Parliament, and did so successfully for eleven years. They were peaceful and prosperous years; there were no disturbances; discontent showed itself only by the emigration of thousands to America, and by legal arguments in the courts, as in the Ship-money case; and it seemed as if the royal supremacy was in the way of being firmly established.

But the storm broke when the Scots, upon whom Charles I had been striving to impose the doctrines and liturgy of the



## PURITAN REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

Anglican Church, offered open resistance. The meeting of the General Assembly at Glasgow, in 1638, is one of the great dates in the history of free institutions. It declared open opposition to the crown. Amid scenes of deep emotion the Scottish people adopted a National Covenant. An army was raised, under the leadership of soldiers trained in the continental wars. Charles, who had no troops save a disorderly militia, could not make head against the Scots; and, at their demand, he was compelled to summon the English Parliament. After exhausting every device to avoid surrender, Charles had to submit to the control of the Long Parliament which met in 1640.

In its first sessions, this great assembly showed a united national resolve that England would have nothing to do with absolute monarchy. The English monarchy must be limited. The king must meet Parliament at least once in every three years. He must recognize the unqualified control of Parliament over taxation, which is the dominating power in government. He must get rid of the ministers whom he had used for the creation of absolutism. He must abolish all the special courts which he had inherited from the Tudors, and allow the work of government to be carried on subject to the ordinary working of the law, with no special privileges for his agents. On all this the nation, or the active elements in the nation, were united; and these principles, which were reached by agreement, outlasted the Civil War, and were accepted after the Restoration.

But this was not enough for the more extreme reformers. They wanted to abolish episcopacy. They wanted to bring the king completely under subjection to Parliament. These demands created a cleavage, the end of which was Civil War.

Once an appeal is made to arms, the result is unpredictable, for all sorts of forces are let loose. The war involved England, Scotland and Ireland; it extended to the new

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

colonies; it raged on the seas. On the Parliamentary side, a great general and statesman appeared, Oliver Cromwell. He swept aside the hesitations that had at first weakened the Parliamentary cause. He created an irresistible new model army. He drove direct for victory, and won it. He even dared to bring the king to the block, a crime which sent a shudder through Europe. No power could resist him; and with admirable energy he set to work to sweep away a multitude of abuses and to turn England into a 'Bible Commonwealth'.

Cromwell was a very great man, inspired by lofty ideals. But the task he had set himself was impossible of performance. He found himself driven to maintain his power by mere military force, and planted in the English people a hatred of military rule that it has never lost. His was the rule of a minority; an earnest and high-minded minority, but still a minority, which seemed to grow weaker as time went on. Law was subjected to force; and there was no escaping from that cruel fact. Try what experiments in constitution-mongering he might, Cromwell could not get 'consent', as he himself ruefully recognized; and without the consent of the governed, no government can last. As long as Cromwell lived, his system survived. He was the greatest ruler England had ever known, and he made her name feared and respected throughout the world. But as soon as he died, the fabric of his power crumbled, and within a year the exiled king, the son of the now sainted Charles I, was riding back in triumph to London, and a violent reaction against Puritanism and all it stood for was afoot.

The main lesson of this whole tragic episode was that a people in whom the habits of liberty and of obedience to law are rooted will not tolerate the rule of force. Mere force, not backed by the public will, can settle nothing; the only true settlement is that which comes from discussion and agreement. This is the root principle of democracy. The

## PURITAN REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

only lasting results of this great upheaval were those which had been won by general agreement at the beginning of the Long Parliament; but these were permanent. All Cromwell's often wise and foreseeing reforms came to nothing, because they had been dictated by force. They had to be achieved all over again, by the slow and sometimes tedious processes of discussion and persuasion.

Cromwell was a believer in religious toleration, at any rate for all faiths that were not politically dangerous; his fall was succeeded by a cruel persecution of the Puritan beliefs he had upheld. He had permitted freedom of the Press, unknown before in England, or anywhere save in Holland, and in *Areopagitica* his State Secretary, John Milton, had written the noblest of all defences of this freedom; after his fall it disappeared, though not for long. Some of his most ardent followers, such as John Lilburne, gave him trouble by their advocacy of a full system of democracy; but Cromwell knew that the first result of such a system (if it had been possible in the then state of public education) would be the overthrow of his own power and the restoration of monarchy. Many daring ideas were advocated by his followers; they were all vitiated by the fact that they must depend upon force for their execution. The union of England, Scotland and Ireland which he effected was a great advance; but it was ruined by the fact that it was carried out by force.

The broad results of the Puritan Revolution therefore were, first and foremost, to convince the English that force is no remedy; secondly to turn England definitely into a limited monarchy as a result of the decisions that had been reached, not by force but by agreement, in the first two sessions of the Long Parliament; thirdly to defeat for ever in England the rigid spiritual tyranny which the Kirk of Scotland strove to enforce; and, fourthly, to leave the more ardent Puritans as a body of 'Dissenters' too strong to be

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

destroyed even by the persecuting code of the Restoration; a body which maintained the Puritan tradition as a powerful element in English life, and which was always ready to enlist itself upon the side of freedom.

### § 6 THE NEW WORLD

During the century whose crowded happenings we have been surveying, the new worlds disclosed by the great explorations were being developed; and in this field the European peoples had an opportunity of displaying their different characteristics, and of illustrating the respective merits and defects of autocracy and liberty.

Until the defeat of the Great Armada in 1588, Spain and Portugal enjoyed a practical monopoly of these opportunities, and, after 1580, when Spain annexed Portugal, the fortunes of the non-European world seemed to be in the hands of Spain, and Philip II bestrode the narrow world like a Colossus. It is needless to dwell upon the effects of the period of Iberian monopoly. These vast realms were subject to despotic control, wielded by governors who had to report on all their actions to the home authorities. Not only was religious orthodoxy rigidly maintained: that went without saying: but all private and individual enterprise was discouraged. The traffic between the Portuguese settlements in the east and Lisbon was a royal monopoly; so also was the traffic between Spanish America and Cadiz. In America the object of this control was to concentrate upon the production of the precious metals, which were regarded as constituting wealth. The development of the natural resources of these rich lands was therefore neglected. And this stream of dead metal, spent upon armies and fleets, did nothing to enrich Spain, or to encourage the development of her own resources by the energy of her own people.

## THE NEW WORLD

It was spread over Europe; it led to a rapid rise of prices; and in the long run it benefited the Dutch and English traders far more than it benefited Spain.

The defeat of the great Armada opened the seas of all the world to the sailors and traders of all nations. The Dutch, the French and the English, all in their own ways, took advantage of the opportunity.

The Dutch used it primarily as traders. They were too few to think of attempting colonization on a large scale. With their shrewd eye to business, indeed, they fixed upon the best centre for trade on the American coast, and planted a settlement at New Amsterdam, later New York. But the object of this settlement was to open out a trade in furs with the interior, and it was treated purely as a commercial agency, not as a self-governing colony. Again, they made a modest settlement at Cape Town, under the aegis of their East India Company, to supply their ships with fresh meat and vegetables on the voyage to and from the East Indies. The settlers were not encouraged to spread afield, and, when they did so, there was friction with the ruling Company.

Trade was the ruling object of the Dutch, and they pursued it with an energy and a courage that ensured success. They had trading stations in the West Indian islands and in Guiana, where they carried on a smuggling traffic with the neighbouring Spanish settlements. They had stations on the West Coast of Africa. Above all, they ousted the Portuguese from the trading domination which they had long enjoyed in the Far East, made themselves masters of Ceylon, of Java, and of the Spice Islands, had factories on the coast of India, and were the only European people who established trading relations with Japan. This immense success, which brought with it vast wealth, was in the main achieved within half a century. It was the outcome of the ebullient energy which free enterprise made possible.

In most of these fields the French also tried to get a foot-

## AN ERA OF CONFUSION

hold, though not, during this period, with much success. They too had a struggling East India Company, slaving stations in West Africa and sugar islands in the West Indies. They too founded colonies in North America — at Quebec and in Nova Scotia — in which they reproduced the feudal social system and the centralized and despotic administration that marked the homeland. No freedom was granted to the colonists; they depended for everything upon the Government of France; and as that Government took little interest in colonial development before the second half of the seventeenth century, the French colonies made little progress, and had a hard struggle for existence. Self-reliance and initiative were stunted by a too dominating Government.

Far different were the enterprises of the English, which were in no case organized, controlled or aided by Government, but owed their existence to the spontaneous initiative of groups of individuals. A modest Company was founded to establish the first colony in Virginia: within a few years it had set up a representative assembly, the first representative body ever created outside Europe. Then the Puritan emigration brought about the foundation of a group of settlements in New England — Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Haven and Rhode Island — 'Bible Commonwealths' in which the settlers put into effect the ideals they could not impose upon England. They were all rigidly Calvinistic and intolerant, with the exception of Rhode Island, which formed a place of refuge for the persecuted in other parts of New England. But they all enjoyed complete self-government from the first, basing their organization upon Church membership. In spite of their reputation as persecutors, Charles I and Laud made no attempt either to prevent the emigration, or to limit the self-governing rights which the emigrants exercised. Indeed, Winthrop, first Governor of Massachusetts, was told by

## THE NEW WORLD

members of the Privy Council that the king 'did not intend to impose the ceremonies of the Church of England upon us; for that it was the freedom from such things that made people come over to us'.

Finally, Maryland was founded in 1632 as a place of refuge for Roman Catholics, who were still penalized in England. A Roman Catholic peer, Lord Baltimore, obtained a charter from Charles I; and the charter provided that no laws should be passed without the assent of the freemen of the colony. Here freedom of worship was allowed to Catholic and Protestant alike: Maryland was one of the few places in the world where toleration existed.

Thus the characteristic feature of these scattered English settlements was their freedom. This was their unique distinction, that every one of them, whether on the American coast or in the West Indies, was equipped with a representative system; no colony founded by any other country was ever thus equipped. It was their freedom that attracted settlers, and enabled these colonies to thrive and grow as none of the other European settlements did; enabled them, also, to adapt themselves to varying conditions unrestricted by the ill-informed dictation of the home authorities. Here were being laid the foundations of the great free commonwealth of the future 'dedicated to liberty'. Here, in the new world, was being raised the standard of freedom. It remained for the future to decide whether, in the new world and in the old, the system of liberty could survive in a world of despots.

## CHAPTER VII

# ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM VERSUS LIBERTY, 1660-1763

### §I DESPOTISM AT ITS APOGEE

By the middle of the seventeenth century absolute monarchy had become the predominant form of government in western Europe. The monarchy of Louis XIV in France was its supreme exemplar, and seemed to afford a dazzling proof of its efficiency and success.

The Dutch still clung to their freedom. England still had her Parliament, which insisted upon being consulted; but all the parsons, and the members of the dominant political party (soon to be known as 'Tories'), were preaching the doctrines of Divine Right and Passive Obedience. Sweden, which had suddenly risen to the rank of a first-rate power, still had its Riksdag of four Estates; but Sweden was incessantly at war, and in war conditions her brilliant warrior-kings were almost absolute. Poland was a very limited monarchy, but it was being reduced to impotence because its Diet of Nobles claimed powers which made firm government impossible. Estates of the mediæval pattern still existed in most of the little principalities of Germany; but they were becoming more and more powerless. The opinion of the time, echoing the teachings of Bodin, was convinced that absolute monarchy alone could ensure national unity and strength. And this seemed to be demonstrated by the splendour and power of Louis XIV, the *Grand Monarque*, the *Roi Soleil*, who dazzled, and was imitated by, all the lesser sovereigns of Europe.

Never before had all the resources of a great State been



## DESPOTISM AT ITS APOGEE

so completely under the control of its master, and never before had any nation seemed so prosperous and so powerful. The States-General had not met since 1614; they were not to meet again till (ominous date!) 1789. The country was governed by able officials, appointed and dismissed by the king at his pleasure: this system had been built up by Richelieu and Mazarin during the first half of the century. The nobles, whose turbulence had given a good deal of trouble under Mazarin, were now reduced to be a mere court nobility, building all their ambitions upon the royal favour. From among them came great generals, such as Condé and Turenne, and brilliant ambassadors who lavished their wealth upon ostentatious display at foreign courts. But they were absolutely dependent upon the king's favours. They were rewarded for their subjection by exemption from the most burdensome taxes, which fell with double weight upon the middle and lower classes. The Church, too, was submissive; and the great churchmen like the great nobles were exempt from the heaviest taxes.

Louis's court was the most resplendent, the most elegant, the most dignified that the world had ever seen: it became the model which every little court in Europe strove to imitate; and French became the language of fashion. French became also the language of diplomacy; for ambassadors of the Great King everywhere set the mode, and wielded immense influence. The French army was the most powerful, the best led, the best equipped in Europe. The French fortresses, designed by the great engineer Vauban, were regarded as impregnable. The French navy, also, was built up to such strength that at one moment it was able to meet and to beat the combined navies of the Dutch and the English. In short, France seemed to be irresistible, as irresistible as Spain had seemed to be a century earlier.

This superb fabric of power rested upon a growing prosperity in the country as a whole. The Government of

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

Louis XIV, unlike that of Philip II, gave assiduous care to the development of agriculture, industry and trade. Under a remarkable administrator, Colbert, roads and canals were constructed, new industries were fostered, agriculture was developed, and oversea trade was stimulated. The French colonies in Canada, the French sugar islands in the West Indies, the French trading-stations in India and West Africa, thrived under royal encouragement.

But all these activities were dependent upon, and strictly controlled by, the Government. They depended not, like the enterprises of England and the United Provinces, upon the spontaneous efforts of free individuals or groups: they were bound by Government regulations, and dependent upon Government subsidies. When, under the pressure of the wars into which Louis's ambitions led him, Government help was withdrawn, they rapidly flagged.

Colbert's remarkable achievements depended largely upon the co-operation of the middle classes of manufacturers and traders. A disproportionate number of these were Huguenots. Like all despots, Louis could not endure that his subjects should hold opinions different from his own, and he looked with growing disfavour upon the Huguenots. While England had encouraged the emigration of Puritans and others to the English colonies, Louis forbade the admission of heretics to the French colonies, and thereby greatly weakened them. He gradually withdrew, and finally, in 1685, cancelled entirely the privileges that had been granted to the Huguenots by the Edict of Nantes: faithlessness to pledged obligations is apparently a characteristic of despots. The result was that the best of the Huguenots took refuge in other countries, in Holland, in Dutch South Africa, in England, in the English colonies, and in Prussia. They carried with them the industries which Colbert had been at such pains to foster; and French prosperity underwent a woeful decline.

## DESPOTISM AT ITS APOGEE

The monarchy of Louis XIV was an Enlightened Despotism. It did not display the dull obscurantism that had marked the despotism of Philip II. The Grand Monarque prided himself upon his patronage of letters, science and the arts. Men of distinction in these fields were rewarded with pensions from the crown; they were harnessed to the glittering chariot of monarchy. But the pensions were renewable annually, which meant that those who drew them knew they must do nothing to displease the king. The Age of Louis XIV was a distinguished one in letters and the arts; it was the age of Molière and of Racine; and Paris in this age became the intellectual capital of Europe. But the Muses do not dance readily in fetters; and it is notable that all the famous men of this period had grown to manhood before Louis's real reign began in 1661. They had no worthy successors in the second half of his long reign. The same thing is true of the generals, the diplomats, the administrators of the period: those of the second generation were markedly inferior to their predecessors.

Such is the debilitating influence of despotism, however enlightened: by fettering the free movement of the human spirit, it causes deterioration. France seemed to breathe more freely when the Grand Monarque died in 1715. The reign that had begun in splendour ended in gloom; and intellectual revival did not begin in France until power fell into the hands of a Regent for the King's infant great-grandson, who lacked the prestige, even if he had had the will, to repress a rising ferment of thought. This fermentation, which was to have great results, was largely stimulated by the manifest failure of the system of Louis XIV, and by the equally manifest success of the system of liberty that had meanwhile been established in England after the Revolution of 1688.

Yet the reign of Louis XIV had seen enlightened despotism at its apogee. It had raised France to a dizzy eminence, in

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

which the domination of Europe seemed to be within her grasp. This dazzling prospect launched her upon a career of aggression, which aroused against her the fears of all Europe. The heart of the resistance to this threat to the liberties of Europe, as to the earlier threat of Philip II, was found in the two free States, England and the Netherlands. The struggle, almost insensibly, became a struggle between despotism and liberty; and it ended in the ruin of the most impressive fabric of power that Europe had ever known, and in the beginning of the astonishing career of free England as the mistress of the seas, and of the lands beyond the seas.

We shall not attempt to narrate the course of this struggle. But if we are to appreciate its significance, we must realize what had been happening in England and Scotland during the period of Louis XIV's dazzling ascendancy.

### § 2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL LIBERTY IN ENGLAND

When Charles II came back in triumph from his long exile to the throne of his fathers, he would have liked to enjoy the unrestricted power that his brilliant cousin Louis XIV enjoyed; and the apparent zeal of cavaliers and churchmen for the doctrines of divine right and passive obedience might well have persuaded him that this was possible. But he was far too shrewd a man not to know that he would have to walk delicately if he was to enjoy his pleasures and avoid going on his travels again.

For, however loudly its members might talk about divine right, the English Parliament was determined to preserve the rights that had been won in 1640. This was true even of the ecstasically Royalist Parliament that sat from 1660 to 1679. It was ready, even eager, to persecute the fallen

## POLITICAL LIBERTY IN ENGLAND

Puritans, whereas Charles, naturally kindly, would have liked a measure of toleration, hoping that the Catholics might profit from it. It was Parliament, not the king, which turned the Puritans into Dissenters, forbade their forms of worship, and deprived them of civic rights; but even Parliament did not drive them out of the country or put them to death, as Louis XIV did with the French Huguenots. The Dissenters remained a distinct element in the nation, not without influence, and always ready to help the cause of freedom.

Parliament jealously preserved its control over legislation and would not permit the king to introduce toleration by dispensing with the penal laws. It impeached ministers who pursued a policy it did not approve, drove the great Lord Clarendon out of the country, and imprisoned the Tory Lord Danby in the Tower. It kept a tight hold upon taxation, and insisted upon knowing how the money it voted was spent.

This drove Charles to become the secret pensioner of his splendid cousin, in order to find the means for his pleasures: and for nearly twenty critical years English foreign policy was subordinated to that of France. During these years Louis was taking his first steps towards the domination of Europe. The task of resisting him, and of financing a combination of European States, fell to the Dutch, who at one moment had to open the dykes and call in the sea to aid them in defending their independence against their insolent foe.

It was not difficult, at first, to persuade the English to take sides against the Dutch, whom they regarded as rivals in trade and colonization, and whom they had fought under Cromwell. Two Anglo-Dutch wars were fought during this reign. The first gave to England the Dutch colony of New Netherlands, out of which two English colonies, New York and New Jersey, were made. Charles and his supporters

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

were, indeed, ardent supporters of colonial development, and this reign determined the lines which English colonial policy was to follow for a century to come. One of the features of this policy was defined by the Navigation Act of 1662 which reserved the trade of the colonies for the mother country. The mercantile classes were in sympathy with this policy; and therefore the first war against the Dutch was not unpopular.

New York and New Jersey were not the only new colonies of this period. The Quaker settlement of Pennsylvania, between New Jersey and Maryland, and the sub-tropical colony of Carolina, south of Virginia, were both organized and settled during Charles II's reign. There was now a continuous line of English colonies on the Atlantic seaboard of North America, from Maine to Carolina. They all thrived and prospered because they were allowed a degree of freedom which no other colonies enjoyed; and immigrants of all countries and creeds were welcomed, for Charles II and his Ministers took it for granted that all English settlements must enjoy full rights of self-government and religious toleration. In this sphere, at any rate, they had no desire to imitate the methods of Louis XIV; and the English tradition of freedom still thrived in the new world.

If trading and colonial rivalry had made the first Dutch war popular, there were deep misgivings about the second Dutch war, which was fought as a result of Charles's secret treaty with Louis, and in which the Dutch had to fight desperately against overwhelming odds. Englishmen were beginning to be nervous about the overweening power of France; to calm their fears, Charles withdrew from the war and gave his niece in marriage to her cousin, William of Orange, the hero of the Dutch resistance. Henceforth Charles was no longer the paid ally of Louis; but he continued to draw his subsidies, in return for neutrality.

Although Charles II was always personally popular,

## POLITICAL LIBERTY IN ENGLAND

suspicion of his Government's policy was beginning to grow in England. Party opposition in Parliament became vehement, especially when, to punish Charles, Louis let his former ministers know that they had been duped, and that besides the public treaty they had signed, there had been a secret treaty which suggested that Roman Catholicism might be reintroduced into England. Fear of Roman Catholicism was always strong in England; it was inflamed by a fabricated story of a Popish Plot to kill Charles and put his Catholic brother James on the throne. The opposition leaders made use of the panic which this story caused, and introduced a Bill to exclude James from the throne. Party controversy became furious, and the party leaders flung nicknames at one another. The court party, supporters of divine right, called their opponents Whigs, after the whey-faced Covenanting rebels of Scotland; the opposition retorted by calling their opponents Tories, after the outlaws in Ireland. These became the titles of the two great political parties in England, which were now definitely organized.

So furious was the rage of parties that civil war seemed possible. But the memory of civil war was too recent to be tolerable. Charles seized his chance; won an election; exiled his leading opponents; and for the remainder of his reign was more nearly an absolute monarch than he had ever been before. He bequeathed to his Catholic brother James a power so great that it really seemed possible for him to make himself an absolute monarch and to reintroduce Roman Catholicism.

It was fortunate for English liberty that James was a Catholic. In three brief years his obstinate fanaticism destroyed the pillars of his power. Tory leaders forgot about divine right and passive obedience, found that they cared for their Church more than for their king, and joined the Whig leaders in inviting William of Orange to come over and help them.

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

The invitation came at a critical moment. A Grand Alliance of European States had been formed to resist Louis, and the war, which was to be the most serious that Louis had yet fought, was about to begin. If England could be brought into the Alliance, the result might be decisive. If, on the other hand, William of Orange, the inspirer and leader of the Alliance, were to be locked up in the civil strife of England, the cause of the Allies would be imperilled. Hoping for the second alternative, and not unwilling to teach a lesson to James II, who was a rather recalcitrant vassal, Louis XIV let William sail when he could have prevented him. Neither Louis nor anybody else could have anticipated the swift collapse of James's resistance. Almost the whole nation was against him. He fled to France; and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was effected without bloodshed, with the assent of the whole English nation, and of the Scots as well.

'Revolution' was a grandiose word for the simple changes that were carried out in 1689. A king and queen chosen by Parliament took the place of a king by divine right and hereditary succession: that was the essence of the change — the new rulers were dependent upon Parliament. Certain practices of Charles II and James II, notably their claim to suspend laws, or to dispense with them in particular cases, were declared illegal. A Mutiny Act, which was necessary for the maintenance of discipline in the army, was passed for one year only: it had to be renewed annually, and therefore Parliament must meet annually. A Licensing Act for the control of the Press, which had been renewed every two years since the Restoration, except during the fiercest of the party conflicts, was simply not renewed; and freedom of the Press was established. A rather grudging Toleration Act was passed, and religious freedom was established. The need for money to carry on the war to which England was now committed led to the creation of the Bank of England and



## POLITICAL LIBERTY IN ENGLAND

the initiation of the National Debt, which created new moneyed interests bound to uphold the new regime.

There had to be some fighting in Scotland and in Ireland before the Revolution was secure, and England could throw her whole weight into the war against Louis XIV. But once she began to play her part, her intervention was decisive. The war might indeed be called the War of the British Succession; for if Louis XIV had been victorious, James II might have been restored. It was also a war between two systems of government, despotism and parliamentarism. And it was a war to save Europe from being dominated by a single power. The main burden of it was borne by the two Maritime Powers, as they came to be called, the two free countries, England and the United Provinces. They could not yet win decisive victories. But they could, and did, check the conquering career of Louis XIV. At its close he was glad to make a peace whereby he gained nothing, a peace of mere exhaustion; and, in the following years, he was willing, in order to avoid a renewal of war, to make arrangements for the partition of the Spanish Empire, to which he had once hoped to succeed.

Then, as if the gods would allow the proud king no peace, he was beset by an irresistible temptation. The King of Spain, dying without heirs, bequeathed the whole of his dominions to Louis's grandson. The dazzling vision of dominion in the old world and the new gleamed again before his aged eyes; he accepted the bequest; and was soon involved in the last and greatest of his wars.

In this struggle, England produced perhaps the greatest military and diplomatic genius to whom she has ever given birth, the Duke of Marlborough. Once again she had as her principal partner the United Provinces; but now England was unmistakably the predominant partner. Her wealth and her trade had increased marvellously since the Revolution. Her navy dominated the seas, and, by the

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

conquest of Gibraltar and Minorca, it secured its hold upon the Mediterranean. Marlborough struck blow after shattering blow at the proud king. The sacred soil of France was deeply invaded, and peace might have been dictated in Paris if the English Tories, succeeding to power, had not come to Louis's aid, and, deserting their allies, made a separate peace.

In this great duel the dazzling power of Louis XIV had been defeated mainly by the two free nations: efficient dictatorship had to yield victory to the greater efficiency of freedom. France was ruined and exhausted; Britain (for we must no longer speak only of England, since during the war the parliaments as well as the crowns of England and Scotland had been united) was not only triumphant, she was enjoying a great wave of prosperity; she was already the mistress of the seas, and the greatest trading power in the world. Her rival and ally, the United Provinces, was falling into the background; but the Maritime Powers still acted together, and were still the chief representatives of freedom.

Most of the States of Western Europe had been involved in the long wars of Louis XIV, and the rest were meanwhile engaged in complicated wars between Sweden, Poland and Russia. Was Christendom never to know peace? The yearning for some kind of organization which would preserve the peace of Europe was expressed by a French diplomat, who had been engaged in the long discussions at Utrecht (1712) — the second of the general Congresses which have followed general wars. The Abbé de St. Pierre published a treatise entitled *Projet de Traité pour Rendre La Paix Perpetuelle*, in which he set forth an elaborate plan not unlike that of Sully a century earlier. His plan, unlike Sully's, was not without result. The politicians, it is true, paid no attention to it, regarding it as mere sentimentalism. But some of the leading thinkers of the next two generations, Leibniz, Voltaire, Rousseau, took it seriously; and it may have

## AN INTERVAL OF PEACE

inspired the book on *Lasting Peace* which the philosopher Kant wrote during the paroxysms of the French Revolutionary wars. The need for some means of securing the peace and unity of western civilization was taking hold of the minds of men. Even the politicians gave some recognition to this need. During the next generation they held frequent congresses in the hope of settling vexed questions; and if these congresses made as little progress as the web of Penelope, who undid every night the work she had done during the day, at least they involved some recognition of a need that was beginning to haunt the minds of thinking men. Wars were still incessant, but men were beginning to ask whether they need be incessant.

### § 3 AN INTERVAL OF PEACE

The Treaties of Utrecht brought to an end the first bout of a long duel between France and Britain, between despotism and political liberty. A second bout was soon to follow, between 1740 and 1763, when the supreme question was to be (though few recognized it at the time) whether the system of despotism or the system of liberty was to prevail in the North American continent.

Between these two periods of war, there was an interval of twenty-five years, when France and Britain were not only at peace, but were close friends, striving by their joint efforts to impose peace upon Europe. During this quarter of a century two things happened which were of great importance to the development of political liberty.

The first of these was that Britain found her way, almost by accident, to a method of reconciling parliamentary supremacy with efficient government: the method of government by a cabinet which is supported by a majority in Parliament. This method has since been adopted by

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

nearly all countries that have established parliamentary government; it is now taken for granted as an obvious device. But it was invented rather by luck than by design.

It was luck that the establishment of parliamentary supremacy coincided with the division of the active elements in British society into two sharply divided political parties, constantly watchful and critical of one another. William III and Anne were annoyed to find that they could not choose what ministers they wanted, because the parties would not act together. They gradually discovered that government only worked smoothly when all their leading ministers were drawn from the party that commanded a majority in the House of Commons. But this practice had not been fully established when George I succeeded to the throne in 1714. Also the Tories, in the Act of Settlement, had insisted that all holders of offices of profit under the crown should be excluded from the House of Commons. If this provision had not been raised in 1707, the system of government that we know could not have grown up, for it depends upon the presence of all ministers in Parliament.

George I was convinced that the Whigs were the only loyal supporters of his family, for the Tories hankered after the return of the exiled Stuarts. He therefore put himself in their hands. The Whigs — whose leaders were in any case some of the greatest magnates in the country — were able, by the use of the immense patronage of the crown, as well as of their own great influence, to build up a solid and unshakeable majority. This was easy, because the parliamentary system was far from representative: it included many members for 'pocket' or 'rotten' boroughs over which complete control could be established by rich men.

Moreover, George I could not speak English, and therefore ceased to attend meetings of his ministers: this became in the English way, a regular custom, which not even George III ventured to break. The ministers were therefore

## AN INTERVAL OF PEACE

able to agree upon a united policy which they presented to the king, with an implied threat to resign in a body, if their proposals were not accepted. Thus the doctrine of the joint responsibility of the Cabinet came to be established; and the leading minister became (in fact, though not yet in name) the Prime Minister. The Cabinet had become the steering-wheel of the State, and the Prime Minister the steersman.

The power of the Cabinet depended, however, entirely upon the support of a majority in Parliament, and especially in the House of Commons, which controlled finance. And although the Whigs nearly always had a standing majority until 1760, there was always a large body of 'independent country gentlemen', who could be counted upon for criticism and opposition.

The government of the Whigs was, in fact, an oligarchy of great landowners. But this was not so unhealthy as it sounds, because Britain was still predominantly an agricultural country, and there were no sharp cleavages, as yet, between the grades of agricultural society, the magnates, the squirearchy, the yeomanry, and the peasantry. Of this agricultural society the great landowners were the natural leaders. Moreover the only powerful independent interest in Britain was the mercantile and financial element, with which, since the foundation of the Bank of England, the Whigs were in close alliance and constant consultation.

Fortunately the Whigs, as a party, were genuinely devoted to what they called 'civil and religious liberty'. They had imbibed the teachings of John Locke, the philosopher of the Revolution, who was the first great European thinker to work out the principles of a free society. His two great books, *Treatises on Government* and *Letters on Toleration*, were classics of free institutions, and wielded an immense influence. By 'civil and religious liberty' the Whigs did not mean merely the limitation of royal power. They believed genuinely in the sovereignty of law, in freedom of

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

belief and worship, in freedom of speech and of the Press, and in the restriction of the power of governments, however constituted, to interfere with the freedom of individuals. All these things the British people did genuinely enjoy under the rule of the Whigs; if their rule was an oligarchy, it was an oligarchy which rooted among the British people the habits and outlook of liberty.

The system of Cabinet Government based upon a majority in Parliament was a lucky invention, a device for ensuring the power of an oligarchy. But it made possible the reconciliation of parliamentary supremacy with efficient government, the enjoyment of personal liberty, and the rule of law. It could be, and it later was, purified from the corruption which attended its foundation; and although it arose from the peculiar circumstances of the time, and no man could ever have deliberately invented it, it proved to be the best device which human ingenuity has yet found to make free government practicable.

The second feature of this interval of peace was that close and friendly intercourse grew up between England and France. Disillusioned about the virtues of their own system of government, Frenchmen fell into an extreme of admiration for the institutions of Britain. For some time a positive anglomania reigned in Paris. The writings of Locke were studied and admired, and gave a fresh start to French political thinking. The revolutionary thinkers of the next period owed a vast deal to him; and Locke may almost be described as the grandfather of the French Revolution.

Great French thinkers, notably Voltaire and Montesquieu, visited England for long spells, and were deeply influenced by what they saw. They saw a country in which law reigned in place of arbitrary power, in which freedom was real, and men could think their own thoughts and express them without impediment, in speech or in print. They saw also a land in which prosperity seemed to be widely diffused, even among

## VICTORY OF FREEDOM IN AMERICA

the peasantry; for at this time, before it was turned upside down by the Industrial Revolution, Britain was a reasonably happy and orderly land. All this impressed them profoundly. Voltaire wrote a book of letters from England, in which he sang the praises of this fortunate land; Montesquieu found in its system of government the basis of the theories which he later wrought out in his epoch-making book, *L'Esprit des Loix*. In short, as a great Frenchman has written, France in these years 'went to school with England'; and the seeds were sown of the great French school of political thought which prepared the way for the revolution.

But the period of friendship between France and England was interrupted in 1740 by the outbreak of a second period of conflict between the two countries, which lasted until 1763. During these years French thinkers no longer indulged in admiration of the national enemy. They became impatient of the prosaic English methods, and began to work out ideals for human society far more sweeping than the English had ever entertained, though still influenced by what they had learnt from England. The fruit of this thinking was the great upheaval in the civilization of the west which we call the French Revolution.

## §4 THE VICTORY OF FREEDOM IN AMERICA

The second bout of the Franco-British conflict nominally arose upon European issues — the succession to the Austrian dominions, which was the cause of the first of two wars, and the attempt of a group of powers to destroy Frederick of Prussia, which was the cause of the second, and the more fiercely fought, known as the Seven Years War. In both cases France and Britain found themselves on opposite sides, though they changed partners.

These wars were important in their bearing upon the

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

balance of power in Europe, but they had little effect either upon the development of civilization or upon the growth of liberty. For both France and Britain they were, indeed, merely distractions from the main interests of these countries, which lay overseas; and, on a broad view, the real importance of these conflicts was that they determined the future destiny of the North American continent, and also of India. Strangely enough, neither country realized that the issues of the continental struggle were of negligible importance for them in comparison with the oversea issue. France allowed herself to be completely entangled in the European struggles; and it was not until the great Pitt came to power in 1757 that Britain awoke to the true nature of the issue, and threw herself into the conflict oversea.

The British colonies were far more prosperous than the French colonies, and ten times as populous. But they all lay along the Atlantic seaboard; and the trackless wooded ranges of the Alleghany mountains, which lay between them and the vast hinterland, discouraged exploration. The French settlers, on the other hand, were tempted inland by the great river St. Lawrence, which brought them to the Great Lakes and the great central plain. In the reign of Louis XIV some of their daring explorers, notably La Salle and Père Marquette, had made their way from the Lakes down the Mississippi to its mouth; and in this vast and fertile desert, little French trading stations were dotted here and there.

During the interval of peace, the French Government, realizing the greatness of the opportunities it was neglecting, threw itself energetically into the development of trade and colonies. A new colony of Louisiana was founded at the mouth of the Mississippi; the trade of the French West Indies was very vigorously developed; and vast hopes were built upon the South Sea trade. Gigantic speculative schemes started by a Scotsman, John Law, produced a stock-jobbing craze in Paris even more excited, and even more disastrous



## VICTORY OF FREEDOM IN AMERICA

in its results, than the South Sea Bubble in London. Presently Frenchmen made their way from Lake Ontario to the upper waters of the Ohio river, where they directly threatened the British colonies, especially Pennsylvania and Virginia. It seemed that the British colonies were going to be hemmed into the coastal strip by a vast French Empire in the hinterland. Backwoods warfare was raging on the upper Ohio, round what later became Pittsburg, even before the Seven Years War began in Europe.

In the early stages of this struggle, in America as in Europe, British affairs were so incompetently directed that utter defeat seemed to be impending. But from the moment when the Great Pitt took the reins, in 1757, an amazing change came. Pitt was perhaps the first British statesman to realize the potency of sea-power: it was sea-power which enabled him to cut off the French colonies from their Motherland. In a succession of dazzling campaigns, the admirals and generals whom Pitt chose shattered the French navy, over-ran Canada and conquered Quebec, and almost swept the French out of the West Indies and West Africa. Never was seen a more startling change of fortune. In 1760 the French dominions in North America had ceased to exist.

Meanwhile a not less dramatic series of events had taken place in India. A Frenchman of genius, Dupleix, had conceived the idea of establishing an ascendancy over the States of southern India by making use of the superior fighting quality of Indian troops when trained in the European manner; and for a time he seemed to have established French supremacy in southern India. But the English imitated his methods, and the genius of Clive broke his power. Then, in the northern province of Bengal, Clive, sent to deal with the Nawab who had seized the English settlement of Calcutta, routed his huge undisciplined army at Plassey, with a handful of troops, and placed a puppet Nawab on his throne. The East India Company had suddenly become the

## ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM V. LIBERTY

dominant power in Bengal; and though it shrank from the responsibility of government, it could not be got rid of, as the neighbouring Vizier of Oudh found when he attacked it and was defeated (1764).

In a few short years, after facing disaster, Britain found herself established as the unchallenged mistress of the seas, and of the North American continent; while, in the East, she had achieved an astonishing victory in India, and had made the first serious impact of western civilization upon that vast and ancient land.

Tremendous and unprecedented problems of government faced her as a result of this sudden accession of power; for some time they baffled her in India, while in America her victory was soon to be followed by the loss of her first empire, and the dissolution of what might have been a great partnership of freedom.

But the great thing was that, as a result of these wars, it had been decided that the North American continent was to be guided, not by the system of despotism (which still reigned in France), but by the system of liberty, for which, with all her faults, Britain had stood throughout the modern age. This was, indeed, a momentous fact in the history of civilization and of liberty. Freedom was to reign throughout that vast and as yet almost unpeopled continent. Among the contributions which Britain has made to the moulding of human destiny, this is not the least.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

#### (A) *Industrialism and Humanitarianism*

##### § I A MANY-SIDED REVOLUTION

THE second half of the eighteenth century was one of the great turning-points in the history of western civilization. It witnessed changes in men's ideas and in their ways of life which have dominated the course of history from that day to this, and are still working among us. It was pre-eminently the age of revolution, not in politics alone, but in many spheres.

The most thrilling aspect of this many-sided revolution was the proclamation of the ideal that human society ought to be, and could be, remodelled on the basis of liberty and brotherhood. That proclamation came from the American and, still more, from the French Revolution; and it turned the world upside down. But not less important was the revolution in the very structure of human society, which began in this period with the early development of the Industrial Revolution; and the Industrial Revolution had its origin in Britain, and was, for a long time, practically confined to Britain. Alongside of these great movements, this age was distinguished by the birth of humanitarianism, the rise of a new spirit of sympathy and compassion for the downtrodden, and for the backward races of mankind, who had hitherto been pitilessly exploited. If this new spirit did not originate in Britain, it at any rate found its most effective expression in Britain. It was to bring about a profound change in the relations between the ruling classes and the subject classes in most European countries, and in the relations between the

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

conquering European peoples and the more primitive peoples of other lands.

All these mighty movements — the revolutionary political ideas of America and France, the Industrial Revolution, and the growth of humanitarianism — were to produce a great upheaval. Ultimately they could only find satisfaction in democracy. The idea of democracy had hitherto found no serious advocates, except among a few impracticable enthusiasts, such as John Lilburne in the time of Cromwell. But the seeds of it were sown in this period. They went on growing during the next hundred years; and nothing could tread them down.

To analyse this many-sided revolution is an essential part of our study; and it will be convenient to begin with those aspects of it which took their rise in Britain.

### § 2 ECONOMIC CHANGE

The economic revolution which began in the second half of the eighteenth century was to expand almost indefinitely man's power of creating utilizable wealth from the gifts of nature. It was to transform the conditions of life of the people in all the countries which it affected. It was, in all these countries, to lead to an immense increase in population which made it necessary for them to draw upon the resources of other countries for the necessities of life, purchasing what they needed by the sale of their own products. It was therefore to bring about a very rapid development both of the unpeopled regions of the world and, eventually, of the backward peoples. Out of this was to come, in the future, an increasing interdependence of all peoples, which was to bring the whole world within a single economic system, under the aegis of western civilization, and ultimately to suggest the need for some common organization for them all. In the

## ECONOMIC CHANGE

meanwhile, through the profound social changes which it brought about, it was to render necessary a transformation of the political systems of the peoples affected by it, and of their relations with one another.

This portentous revolution had two sides, agrarian and industrial. On the agrarian side, the development of new crops, of new methods of cultivation, and of new ways of breeding animals — in short, the application of scientific method, at first in a crude and rudimentary way — was to multiply immensely the amount of food which could be produced on a given acreage and by a given amount of labour. On the industrial side, the invention of machinery, the use of steam-power, the development of new and flexible ways of financing production, and a rapid improvement in the modes of transport, were to revolutionize industrial production, and to place at the disposal of men an infinite variety of new ways of satisfying their needs at greatly reduced cost.

These vast changes, whose significance nobody at first perceived, all began in Britain. Why did they all begin in Britain, and not some in one country and some in others? It may be said that Britain was free from war. She was, in fact, engaged in all the wars of the period; and, if she was free from invasion, that is equally true of France. It may be said that she had abundant coal supplies; but so also had France, Belgium and Germany, though these countries showed no energy in developing them. In any case, the early mechanical inventions owed nothing to coal, being designed to be driven by water power; and the remarkable development of agriculture, which was one of the great achievements of this period, was in no degree due to the use of coal. Something other than merely material factors must be called into account to explain the pre-eminence of Britain in this field, and its long continuance. May not the explanation be found in the greater freedom of initiative and enterprise which Britain enjoyed?

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

Britain rapidly became the best farmed country in the world; and this was largely due to the enthusiasm of members of the ruling class, from the king downwards, for scientific agriculture. Britain also took and kept the leadership of the world in industrial production, especially in the textiles and in iron and steel. In this development, however, the ruling class of landowners had no part. It was due to a new class of industrial capitalists, who mainly rose from the working class. What is more, these new industries grew up in the north and west, hitherto the most backward and thinly peopled half of the country: the south and east, which had always been the chief home of English civilization, were almost undisturbed by the new development. Lancashire became the home of the cotton industry, which rapidly grew to great dimensions in this period; the ancient woollen industry of the Yorkshire valleys dwarfed the industries of Norfolk and the south-west; the iron and steel industries found their chief homes in Yorkshire, Lancashire, the north-east, the western Midlands and South Wales. This was, in the first instance, because the hill-country supplied the water-power which could drive the new machines; later, when steam-power began to be used, these regions contained the great coalfields; and before the development of the railways, proximity to coal-supplies was of the first importance to all factories.

Population grew rapidly in these districts: all the more rapidly because, in the textile trades in particular, child-labour could be employed on a large scale, and children were a financial asset to their parents. Ugly, cramped and sordid towns grew up to house this new population; and no attempt was made to regulate this growth, because the traditional system of local government could not meet their needs, and the ruling class, which took little or no interest in this transformation, never thought of working out a new system.

## ECONOMIC CHANGE

The growth of the new agriculture and of the new industry increased immeasurably the wealth of Britain, and perhaps alone enabled her to stand the strain of the great wars into which she was soon to be drawn. It increased especially the wealth of the ruling class of landowners, who drew great revenues from the increased production of their farm-lands, and from the ground-rents of the new towns, and the royalties which they demanded for every ton of coal extracted from their land.

But the economic revolution also brought about profound social changes. Britain was no longer predominantly a country of large and small landowners, in which even the peasantry had some interest in the soil they tilled — holding a strip or two in the 'open fields' which still covered a large proportion of the countryside, and rights of pasturage on the commons that were part of the system in every village. This old system, under which the whole village community carried on the work of tillage in co-operation, and determined the rotation of crops and fallow, mainly according to traditional practice, could not be adjusted to the needs of the new agriculture. The strips in the open fields, and the commons that were used for pasturage, were redivided into consolidated blocks, under the terms of innumerable enclosure acts, one for each township or parish, which were readily passed by a parliament of landowners. Even if the small man got a fair allotment in exchange for his strips and his pasturage rights, he could seldom afford to fence it, nor could he compete with his wealthier neighbours in the new farming methods. In most cases he sold his land to them, and dropped into the ranks of the landless labourers living on their wages. The interests of this new class, this rural proletariat, which had no interest in the land it tilled, were sharply in conflict with the interests of the big capitalist farmers for whom they worked, and with those of the great landowners who dominated the country. The coherence of

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

the old order in rural Britain was breaking down; and if justice was to be done to the majority of the rural population, political power must no longer be monopolized by the land-owners.

The industrial changes had even more important social effects. Here were two new classes coming into existence, which were creating the new wealth of Britain; but they found no place in the existing framework of society. On the one hand, there was the rising class of industrial capitalists, the owners of the new factories: hard-headed and often hard-hearted men, who not unnaturally regarded their factories as their own property, since they had to take all the risks of organizing and running them. They looked upon their employees as 'hands', to be paid the lowest wages they would accept and to be discharged when no longer needed.

On the other hand, there was the class of wage-earning operatives, much larger now than it had ever been before, and growing year by year. The older generation of textile workers had worked in their own homes, and had, within limits, fixed their own hours of work and been their own masters. Now the 'hands' were massed in factories, where men, women and children worked together for very long hours. They could not have any sense of pride or property in their work. If they lost their jobs, they had no resource save the Poor Law; and once a man and his family came under the authority of the Poor Law, they lost much of their freedom: their children might be taken from them, to be apprenticed to some factory. In these conditions, British freedom meant little to the members of this class; and in the ugly towns in which they dwelt, there was a sad lack of civilizing influences.

These two classes, of capitalist *entrepreneurs* and of factory operatives, that had grown up in what had hitherto been the least important parts of the country, were nevertheless making the new wealth of Britain and laying the foundations



## HUMANITARIANISM

of her future greatness. A place must be found for them in the political system, and this involved a large political reconstruction. What is more, if freedom was to have any meaning for these growingly important elements of the population, there would have to be also a large social reconstruction. The traditional 'civil and religious liberties', though still of the highest value, were not enough for the needs of the new social order. A more generous conception of what liberty demanded was needed if the vastly increased capacity for wealth-production which began to be displayed in this period was not to produce a deterioration, rather than an enrichment, of civilization.

The new era was thus bringing unprecedented problems, first to Britain, but later to all the countries that were in turn affected by the economic revolution. A revolutionary transformation of human society was beginning.

### § 3 HUMANITARIANISM

Happily, alongside of these material changes, new spiritual forces were at work which, though they were at first weak, at least promised some qualification of the cruel results which followed from material change. In this age of wars, and of ruthless economic development, the humanitarian spirit, never wholly dead, began to show a new vigour.

The main inspiration of the humanitarian movement in Britain came from a religious revival, which for thousands of people gave a new value to life, and a new dignity to manhood. In the first half of the eighteenth century a cool rationalism reigned in Britain as in Europe; the fervours of the seventeenth century had burnt themselves out. Great masses of the people were no longer under any religious influence, and what reached them was in most cases so formal that it had little effect. But in the middle years of the

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

century this torpor was disturbed by the preaching of the Wesleys and their colleagues. Year in, year out, these unwearied apostles travelled over the country, covering an average of five thousand miles every year, preaching often twenty times a day, wherever they could find hearers, in market-places, in fields, on bare hillsides; braving the hardships of the weather, and often the hostility of idle crowds, but never discouraged; telling degraded miners, or peasants, or paupers, or the denizens of the slums of towns, that they were the Sons and Daughters of God; exalting their sense of the dignity and nobility of life; teaching them to endure, to hope, to fix their eyes upon something greater than themselves, to love and help one another. The greatness of the Wesleys is not that they founded a powerful new denomination — they did this reluctantly, and only because the Church of England would have nothing to do with them — but that they re-created faith and hope among hundreds of thousands of the neglected, and drew them into various activities of mutual service.

The influence of the Wesleyan revival was quickly felt in the Anglican and Nonconformist churches. A fervent evangelicalism brought a new life into all the churches, and changed the temper of English society. Its influence was perhaps greatest in the middle classes, to which the industrial revolution was giving a new importance; but it affected the tone even of London society, and the scepticism of the early century gave place, in important circles, to a real religious fervour in its later decades. Something of the sobriety and earnestness of seventeenth-century Puritanism returned; something also of its narrowness.

The evangelical school laid little emphasis upon the Church as the vehicle of God's ordinances; its emphasis was mainly upon the relations between the individual soul and God. It was an individualist creed, which threw responsibility upon the individual, and emphasized personality. It was

## HUMANITARIANISM

thus in harmony with the prevailing political ideas of the time. It created a powerful new force in British opinion, which made itself felt in many ways. In particular, a creed which insisted that love of God must express itself through love of one's fellow-men could not but give a great stimulus to humanitarianism, the growing strength of which was one of the glories of the age.

Another factor operated in the same direction. This was an age in which not only rationalism but sentiment swayed men's minds. This found expression in the growth of the novel, which, of all literary forms, lends itself most readily to the portrayal of various aspects of life. In France, such books as Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, Voltaire's *Candide*, St. Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, and Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* helped to create an understanding sympathy with the less fortunate members of society, and to make men ready to contemplate great social changes. But Britain was pre-eminently the home of the novel; and books such as Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Richardson's *Pamela*, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*, Fanny Burney's *Evelina* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams* widened the range of men's sympathies and interests, and made them ready to relieve the distresses which were thus revealed.

Occasional outbursts of mob violence helped to strengthen the movement. Such an episode as the Gordon Riots of 1780, in which the underworld of London boiled up, and for some days exhibited its degradation to the world, aroused, no doubt, primarily a sense of fear; but in a generation that was full of sentiment it awakened also a feeling that something must be done to mend the evil conditions which produced such results.

There had been some beginnings of humanitarianism earlier in the century. A few hospitals for the poor — the first that had been founded in England since the thirteenth century — were established by public subscriptions in various

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

parts of the country. Some institutions for homeless children, such as the Foundling Hospital in London and the Bluecoat School in Liverpool, were founded by private benevolence. The only new colony of the period — Georgia (1733) — was instituted by the benevolence of a man of fashion, General Oglethorpe, as a place of refuge for the imprisoned debtors whose unhappy plight had aroused his compassion.

But it was in the second half of the century that the movement became vigorous. Its driving force came from the religious revival that made love of one's neighbours the counterpart and the evidence of love of God.

A multitude of hospitals and dispensaries were founded by private benevolence: by the end of the century there was at least one in every considerable town and in every county. There had hitherto been, apart from a very few charity schools, no provision for the education of the children of the poor. In 1780 Robert Raikes of Gloucester started a school on Sundays for children who were at work during the week. The example was imitated by all the churches, and soon day schools were added. For nearly a century, the work of elementary education was left to the churches, and became a recognized part of their work. The education given was rudimentary, but at least a large proportion of the English people learnt to read and write: the Scots were more fortunate, having had a parish-school system since the sixteenth century. Again, the treatment of prisoners in gaols was incredibly harsh and cruel; the degrading condition of the gaols turned them into schools of crime, all the more so since cruel penal laws sentenced men to imprisonment for very minor offences. Prison reform began with the devoted work of John Howard, who gave his life to the work; and after his death in 1790 it was carried on by Elizabeth Fry. The tireless labours of these pioneers was not limited to Britain, but extended over every part of Europe.

These were the first springs of what was to become a

## HUMANITARIANISM

mighty river of goodwill, which was to transform the character of our civilization. The conscience of men was being awakened to a sense of the myriad evils that had to be removed; their religion was teaching them that all men were their brothers.

This new temper was not limited to the home-field. When men inspired by humanitarian ideals looked abroad, they saw the backward peoples subjected to pitiless exploitation. In particular they saw the iniquities of the slave-trade, which had gone on since the first contact of the European peoples with negro races. It was one of the most lucrative trades in the world. All the western nations competed eagerly for a share in it, and England had prided herself upon having distanced all competitors. There had never been any moral condemnation of it. But the humanitarian spirit saw in it an outrage on humanity.

Perhaps it was the growing strength of this sentiment which inspired a great judge, Lord Mansfield, to deliver his famous judgment in 1772 on an application, on a writ of *habeas corpus*, for the release of a negro slave who had been brought to England. 'The state of slavery', he pronounced, with all the majesty of a Lord Chief Justice, 'is of such a nature that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political, but only by positive law . . . It is so odious that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive law. Whatever inconvenience may follow from this decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the Law of England; and therefore the black must be discharged.' Such a pronouncement by a great legal luminary would have been unthinkable in any earlier age. From that moment no man could be a slave on British soil; and Canada, being British, became a place of refuge for slaves escaping from the United States, where 'positive law' still maintained slavery until 1865.

The most remarkable achievement of the humanitarian

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

movement was the abolition of the slave-trade. In 1787 a little group of evangelicals and humanitarians began an agitation for the prohibition of the trade. After only twenty years the British Parliament was persuaded, in 1807, to make it illegal for any British subject to engage in this trade, which had been the source of immense wealth. Twenty-six years later, the British Parliament, though the country was heavily burdened by the debts incurred in the Napoleonic War, voted the huge sum (for those days) of £20,000,000 to purchase the freedom of all the slaves in the British Empire. Nothing could more clearly demonstrate the strength of the humanitarian movement, or the changed attitude towards the backward peoples which it was bringing about.

This changed attitude was confirmed and reinforced by the remarkable missionary activity which began in Britain in the last years of the century. Hitherto the Protestant Churches (with the notable exception of the Moravian Brethren from Bohemia) had shown no such zeal for the conversion of the heathen as the Catholics had displayed steadily since they were brought into contact with the primitive peoples. The cobbler William Carey, who started out in 1793, with a fund of £13 2s. 6d. to convert the Indian peoples was the forerunner of an army of missionaries sent out and maintained by all the British Churches. Their reports, read to the congregations whose pence supported them, created a new sympathy with the peoples for whom they spoke; and gave birth to the new principles of colonial policy which led British governments, in the nineteenth century, to think of Britain not as the 'owner' of colonies, but as a trustee for the interests of the peoples who inhabited them.

When we look back upon the era of revolution, there seems to be no aspect of it more deserving of honour than the new spirit to which it gave birth, the spirit of compassion for the downtrodden; for the labouring mass whose duty it had been,

## HUMANITARIANISM

in all countries and since the beginning of time, to labour for a pittance and to obey the masters whom their labour supported; and for the primitive peoples who had been ruthlessly exploited since the European first made contact with them. The growing influence of this spirit more truly represented the opening of a new era in human affairs than either the mastery over the forces of nature which the industrial revolution was putting into the hands of the civilized peoples, or even the earthshaking political upheaval which we shall have to consider in the next chapter. This new spirit was not by any means limited to Britain. There are many evidences of its influence in other countries. But in no country was it more potent, and in no country did it exhibit itself in more diverse forms, than in Britain. Perhaps its influence alone explains why it was that the great and cruel social changes which were taking place in Britain did not lead, as they might well have done, to violent and destructive revolutionary disturbances.

An eminent anthropologist has said that the best criterion of the development of civilization is to be found in the growth of charity. By 'charity' he doubtless means two distinct things. On the one hand he means the toleration of differences of opinion in politics and religion; and this was certainly growing in the age we are considering, nowhere more than in Britain. On the other hand, he means compassion for the sufferings or disabilities of other men, and eagerness to help in removing them. The humanitarianism which was growing in this age, and which was to go on growing in the next, was perhaps the highest expression of advancing civilization. It thrived most where freedom was greatest; and in this as in other ways, the progress of civilization was dependent upon the advancement of liberty.

## CHAPTER IX

# THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

### (B) *The Intoxicating Doctrine of Liberty*

#### § I A REVOLUTION IN IDEAS

THE most thrilling aspect of the era of revolution was the promulgation of the idea that human society ought to be, and could be, reconstructed upon the basis of liberty and brotherhood. The dynamite of this idea caused long wars and turmoils. At first, except in America, it produced very little positive result. But it went on working until, in the second half of the nineteenth century, it brought about the establishment of democracy in most of the countries of Europe. It is still at work, striving to enlarge our ideas of what the service of liberty demands.

'The middle of this century seems destined to mark an epoch in the history of the human spirit by the revolution in ideas which it seems to be preparing.' Thus wrote the French mathematician and philosopher, D'Alembert. He was right. The thoughts and the writings of the middle years of the eighteenth century had an effect upon the development of civilization and of liberty greater than that of the thoughts and writings of any earlier period.

Although this ferment of ideas was shared, in some degree, by all the countries of western Europe, the leadership fell to France. Down to 1740, France, as we have seen, had 'gone to school with England'; but the admiration of English methods almost died out when the second series of Anglo-French wars began in that year. British institutions, however much they might be admired, could not be imitated. The



## A REVOLUTION IN IDEAS

English were proud to claim that they enjoyed 'inherited liberties'; British liberty, as Burke boasted, 'had a pedigree, and ensigns armorial'; and neither the English nor the Dutch ever imagined that their traditional rights could be communicated to other peoples, or dreamed of starting a crusade for the purpose of extending them.

It was the thinkers of France who blazoned abroad the idea that liberty was the natural and inalienable right of all men, and who embarked upon soaring speculations which claimed to be of universal validity. That was what lit the fires of revolution. Moreover, the French system, unlike the British, was so open to attack that its critics were never gravelled for lack of matter; and criticism of it had a general validity because it had been the model for most countries in Europe. And, as French had been the language of culture throughout Europe since the days of Louis XIV, the great French writers had a public in every part of the continent. Despotism as it was, the French government prided itself upon its enlightenment, and dared not be too high-handed with writers who had the ear of Europe and were the darlings of the Paris *salons*. The worst that could happen to them was that their books might be banned for a time, and that they might have to take refuge in Holland or Switzerland, in Berlin or St. Petersburg, where they were sure of a welcome.

French thought, therefore, dominated Europe. Between the death of Louis XIV and the American Revolution, the dictator of European Letters was the great Frenchman Voltaire (1694-1778), who wielded such an influence as no mere man of letters has ever wielded, before or since. He expressed the very spirit of his age, its rationalism, its scepticism, its distrust of enthusiasm. But he also had a noble hatred of tyranny, injustice, cruelty and hypocrisy; and he had a style of such clarity and force as could drive his criticism into the minds of his readers. Voltaire was not a constructive thinker; he was no revolutionist or preacher of democracy; he believed

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

that enlightened despotism alone could remedy the evils he satirized. But the corrosive acid of his wit destroyed reverence for the existing order in Church and State; and in that way, all unknowing, he prepared the way for the great upheaval.

His great contemporary, Montesquieu (1689-1755) was also no revolutionist. He was still under the spell of admiration for the British system; and his famous book, *L'Esprit des Lois*, which was to exercise immense influence upon the actual form of the revolutionary movement, expressed this admiration. For Montesquieu the object of any system of government should be the maintenance of liberty; and he believed that the chief safeguard of liberty was that the three functions of government, legislation, administration, and the judiciary, should be entirely independent of one another. He thought (mistakenly) that such a division of powers existed in the British system, and this idea had a profound influence in shaping the course of the revolution both in America and in France.

It was from the men of a younger generation than Voltaire and Montesquieu that the more explosive ideas of the Revolutionary age came. Convinced that man was entering a new era of knowledge and thought, a group of writers, headed by Diderot (1713-84) and D'Alembert (1718-83), planned an *Encyclopaedia* of human knowledge which should be worthy of the age of enlightenment. Extending to seventeen volumes, with many supplements, this great undertaking was completed between 1751 and 1763. Besides surveying the progress of all the sciences, and the methods of all the industrial arts, it dealt also with the more dangerous subjects of politics, economics and theology. It became the vehicle for the ideas of liberal reformers, and the rallying-point for a school or party known as the *Philosophes*. In every article it assumed as axioms that religious toleration and freedom of thought were rights which ought never to be withheld, and that the primary concern of Governments ought to be not

## A REVOLUTION IN IDEAS

power or glory, but the liberty and wellbeing of their subjects. It was, in effect, a gigantic manifesto for liberty; and it had its influence upon the educated classes throughout Europe.

Voltaire, Montesquieu, the Encyclopaedists, and many other writers, appealed to the intellect. But the new ideas had to appeal also to the emotions before they could issue in action, and here lay the contribution of Rousseau (1713-78). This vagabond sentimentalist, this inspired wastrel, had a poetic gift and a poignancy of sentiment which the *Philosophes* lacked. For him the individual spirit was the ultimately sacred thing which no potentate or power had any right to override. Freedom was an inalienable right of man: 'men are born free, they are everywhere in chains'. No form of government could be justified which did not secure this inalienable right.

In his chief political treatise, *Le Contrat Social* (1762), Rousseau based his doctrines mainly upon Locke; but he gave a new twist to the doctrine of social contract, making it the foundation of an argument for complete democracy. At the same time, he made qualifications in his advocacy of democracy: real democracy, in his view, was only practicable in small communities like his own Geneva, in which every citizen could take a direct part in government; he regarded the representative system as a mere parody of democracy, and said scornfully that the British people were only free during elections, and only a few of them then. But his enthusiastic disciples did not trouble themselves with these subtleties. What they took from him was a belief in the inherent justice of democracy, and the sovereignty of the whole people. Before the eyes of a generation utterly disillusioned about the justice of the existing order, Rousseau displayed a vision of a new order, in which all men should be free and equal, and governments should be not engines of oppression but organs of the common will. This was the

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

vague but thrilling ideal which was to inspire the coming revolution.

The British people, already enjoying a real degree of liberty, were not much influenced by these abstract and sweeping ideas. Yet even in Britain, political discussion was keen; a demand for parliamentary reform was taking shape; and when it was negatived by the ruling aristocracy, there were signs of a readiness for more violent courses, which caused the outbreak of the French Revolution to be welcomed by the disfranchised classes, especially as the discontents born of the industrial revolution were by that time beginning to be felt.

But political thinking in Britain was more sober and more practical than in France. Burke, the deepest political mind that Britain has produced, was an impassioned lover of liberty; he defended it in America, in India, in Ireland, and in the struggle against the claims of George III. But he found the bulwarks of liberty not in abstract theories about the rights of man, but in the delicate balance of forces within the community which had been created by the slow wisdom of time, and which could not be disturbed without danger. For that reason he became a defender of the privileges of aristocracy, and even of the absurdly unrepresentative character of the British Parliament; and when violent revolution broke out in France, he was its most formidable critic.

The Conservatism of Burke was not the only British contribution to political thought. In 1776 Jeremy Bentham published his *Fragment on Government*, the first expression of a new school of thought, 'Utilitarianism', which was to play a very great part in the coming reconstruction of British society. Impatient with the prevalent complacency about British institutions, he was also scornful of the abstract rights which Rousseau enunciated, and of the wire-drawn theories of Social Contract. He founded his philosophy upon the

## A REVOLUTION IN IDEAS

principles that all men seek happiness, and that each man is the best judge of his own happiness, and ought therefore to be consulted upon everything that affects it. This was a new argument for complete democracy. The object of all States, according to Bentham, should be to attain 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'; and by that criterion all constitutions and projects of legislation should be judged. Bentham's crabbed style prevented his having a wide public; but he founded a school of thinkers, and taught them to work out, by patient investigation, the practical means by which their principles could be brought into operation. His own labours were mainly devoted to plans for the reform of the legal system; and in this field two Italian writers, Beccaria and Filangieri, also made contributions of high value.

Not only in political but in economic thought these years were very fruitful. A French school of writers, known as the *Physiocrats*, attacked the whole system of government restrictions on agriculture and industry. Their name means that they believed in letting nature have its way. They taught that the real wealth of a nation consisted not in gold and silver (as most men had believed) but in the products of the soil. They pled for freedom of enterprise and trade. *Laissez-faire*, *laissez-passer* was their watchword; and the phrase became a nickname for the doctrine of extreme individualism. They could see the evils of government meddling, but not those of unregulated competition. But they too were pleading for freedom as the source of prosperity.

In Britain the Scottish philosopher David Hume was arguing, as early as 1751, that wealth consists not of money but of goods, and that the most prosperous nation must be the one which obtains in return for its labours the greatest quantity and variety of desirable things, whether by home production or by foreign trade. He concluded that Government restrictions on trade only restricted national prosperity.

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

The climax of the new economic thinking was reached when in 1776 — the same year in which Bentham's *Fragment on Government* appeared — Adam Smith published his classic book, *The Wealth of Nations*. This was the first systematic survey of the whole field of economics; it was a masterly piece of analysis. Basing his argument upon the undeniable fact that wealth is increased by the division of labour, and that a group of men working in co-operation could produce vastly more than the same number of men working in isolation, he showed that there is division of labour also between nations, which have facilities or aptitudes for producing different things; and that if they were free to exchange their products, the wealth of all could be increased. His conclusion, like Hume's, was that the less a Government interfered with trade, the better it would be for its subjects.

Thus the conclusion of the economic argument, as of all the other lines of thought pursued by this intellectually active generation, was that the enlargement of liberty in every sphere was the surest recipe for human welfare. The thinkers of Europe were preparing the way for the erection of a system of liberty as the means to a great advancement of civilization.

The most remarkable tribute to the influence of the new ideas was their effect upon most of the despots of Europe. The generation before the French Revolution deserves to be known as the Age of Benevolent Despots. Almost every sovereign in Europe either took the lead himself in reforming activities, or gave his confidence to a reforming minister; and the ablest ruler of the time, Frederick the Great of Prussia, described himself as 'the first servant (*premier domestique*) of his people': a servant, no doubt, of the old-fashioned type who knew what his masters needed better than they did themselves! Laws were codified, torture was abolished; in some States serfdom either disappeared or was modified; shackles on trade and industry were removed; education was

## THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

encouraged and academies of science and the arts were founded; religious toleration was generally granted.

In short, this was an age of vigorous reform, due to the teachings of the philosophers; and it might seem that, as most of the philosophers believed, benevolent despotism offered the best hope of progress. Some of these reforms were lasting. But they did nothing to stave off the revolution. Everything was to be done *for* the people; nothing *by* the people. But the peoples were learning to desire something greater than improved material well-being. They were learning to desire liberty, and to be their own masters. It was this growing desire which made revolution inevitable.

### § 2 THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The aspirations after liberty which were fermenting in all the civilized countries led to a long series of political revolutions and great wars. Indeed, the revolutionary movements which sprang from these beginnings may be said to have extended from 1775 to 1850, though we are here concerned only with their beginnings.

It is a strange fact that the first of these revolutionary demands for liberty should have begun in the British colonies in America, which enjoyed a higher degree of liberty than any other lands in the world; and that it should have been a revolt against the country which, beyond all others, had been the stronghold of liberty.

But there were limitations to the colonists' freedom. Their trading relations with other countries were under the control of the mother country; and although this control was far less complete than Spain, France or Holland had imposed upon their colonies, although it was balanced by valuable monopoly rights in the home market, and although it had always

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

been accepted in theory as a return for the protection given by the British navy, it was in practice evaded, and attempts to enforce it were sharply resented. In each colony, while a representative body controlled legislation and taxation, the executive power was wielded by a Governor appointed by the British Government; and this also was resented, although the authority of the crown, exercised through these Governors, afforded the only means of organizing common action among the thirteen colonies, which had refused to accept any federal organization. The colonies, in truth, had not much to complain about. But liberty strives always after its own fulfilment.

The immediate cause of the revolt was that Britain, having accumulated a vast debt largely in fighting for the colonies, and being still under the necessity of maintaining an army in America to defend the colonists against attacks from the Indians, such as actually took place in 1763, thought it fair that the colonies should make some contribution to their own defence, and, since they would not federate, tried to impose modest taxes upon them. The first attempt, which took the far from burdensome form of requiring that certain documents should be stamped, was only made after a year had been allowed in which the colonists were invited (and failed) to suggest alternative means of raising the money. The Stamp Act caused an outcry, and was withdrawn. Then the device was tried of raising money by means of duties on certain imports, the colonists having always admitted the right of the mother country to regulate trade. But these duties were not designed to regulate trade, but to raise a revenue. The opposition of the colonists was as vigorous as before. They took their stand upon the high constitutional ground that taxation without representation was a denial of liberty. The British Government withdrew all the duties but that on tea, and revised the tea duties so that the colonists got their tea more cheaply than Englishmen



## THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

could. That made no difference. Year after year the controversy went on, until in 1774 the British Government, in exasperation, cancelled the charter of Massachusetts, and thus gave colour to the belief that the liberties of the colonies were seriously threatened. Overt resistance began (1775); the other colonies gave their support to Massachusetts, and called a Continental Congress, which first drew up a Declaration of Rights, and then, after the war had lasted for a year, issued a Declaration of Independence.

This was a momentous event. Not only did the Declaration of Independence create a powerful new free State; it proclaimed the revolutionary doctrine that a people had the right to repudiate their allegiance if they believed themselves to be misgoverned. And this great pronouncement started with words that echoed the teaching of Rousseau, which was already stirring men's minds in the old world. It opened with a declaration that all men are born equal, and have an inalienable right to liberty. It was a new thing in human history that a great State should thus choose as the motto of the first chapter in its history a proclamation of universal human rights.

The war thus begun lasted for seven years, and ended in the destruction of the greatest partnership in freedom that had ever existed. Not only the unity of the British Empire, but the unity of the colonies themselves, seemed to be unlikely to survive their successful rebellion. The colonies all adopted new constitutions; they were in the main simply modifications of their earlier systems. But it seemed at first impossible to find a means of devising a common authority which could replace the authority hitherto wielded by the British crown. Seven years of angry controversy had to be lived through ere a solution was reached by the acceptance of a constitution for a new Federal State.

The American Constitution, thus established, was a monument of political wisdom. It defied the doctrine of sovereignty,

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

for no man could say where sovereignty resided in the complicated system of checks and balances for which the constitution provided. The depth of the influence exercised by the political thinking of the preceding generation was shown by the fact that the governing idea of the new system was Montesquieu's doctrine that 'separation of powers' was the greatest safeguard of liberty. The functions of government were clearly divided between the individual States and the Federation. Both in the States and in the Federation the spheres of the executive and the legislature were sharply delimited. And to ensure that none of these independent authorities invaded the province of another, the Supreme Court was established with jurisdiction over these problems. There was a danger that these checks and balances might lead to deadlocks. In fact, they have done so, on many occasions; and if the United States had not been saved, by three thousand miles of ocean, from the dangers which beset the European nations, the system might have broken down.

But it did not break down. It stood the strain of a gradual expansion which ultimately turned the United States into a gigantic realm extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and inhabited by a population drawn from an extraordinary diversity of stocks. For all these peoples, the Constitution drafted by the wisdom of a group of men in the eighteenth century has maintained and preserved the essentials of liberty, and made their country a place of refuge for the oppressed of all lands. The magnitude of this achievement seems all the greater when one reflects that this was actually the first attempt ever made to define a system of government inspired by the ideal of liberty.

What is more, this system was from the first constructed upon a fully democratic basis — apart from the numerous negro slaves, who formed a large element in the population of the Southern States; for it was assumed that the declarations of the equality and the inalienable liberty of all men

## THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

did not apply to slaves. But with this important exception, the equality of all men before the law, and their right to a voice in the conduct of their common affairs, were unmistakably asserted.

Thus the American Revolution seemed to afford a demonstration that the ideal of democracy was capable of being successfully put into practice. During the war, thousands of French soldiers had fought side by side with the Americans; for the French monarchy, which had never given any liberty to its own colonists, had come to the aid of the Americans in the hope of wreaking vengeance upon Britain. By doing so, it hastened its own downfall. The French soldiers and their officers did not, indeed, see the American system in full operation. But they saw a real freedom, a genuinely democratic system, in existence in the separate States; and they saw a universally diffused prosperity such as was not known in any European country. They did not reflect that this freedom had come from Britain, and had been ripening during a century and a half; nor did they realize that the general prosperity which they saw was due to the limitless resources of a vast and fertile new land, where no traditional privileges had had time to establish themselves. They concluded that liberty was not only a boon worth pursuing for its own sake, but that it also brought the further boon of material prosperity; and they returned to France, in 1782, to spread the good news abroad, and in that way to prepare the way for the great upheaval which began seven years later.

The American Revolution thus gave a powerful stimulus to the French Revolution which succeeded it. It did this in more than one way. On the one hand, it seemed to show that liberty brought wellbeing, and that the Kingdom of Heaven could be taken by violence. On the other hand, the participation of France in the American war had been so costly that, coming on the head of a long period of financial maladminis-

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

tration, it forced the French king to take the nation into consultation, and so gave their opportunity to those who wanted great changes.

### § 3 THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The World Revolution (for it was no less) began in America, which was still a remote land, whose contacts with Europe were relatively slight. But it was almost immediately transferred to France, which had been for many centuries the very heart of western civilization; and from France its influence was extended over almost the whole of Europe.

There were many reasons why the great upheaval began in France. One was that France had been the seed-plot of the explosive ideas which were now diffused over a great part of Europe. Another was that the wars of the years from 1740 to 1782, culminating in the war of the American Revolution, had revealed the bankruptcy of the despotic system which had once been the admired model of most of the European States, but was now incapable even of achieving military success. Even in the war that grew out of the American revolt, France, with the aid of Spain, had been unable to get the better of free Britain, and the only people to emerge victorious from this conflict were the free Americans. Moreover, the efficient bureaucracy which Louis XIV had organized was now being strangled by its own red tape, as bureaucracies are always apt to be unless they are subjected to a constant breeze of free criticism.

A third reason was that the middle class was more numerous and more prosperous in France than in any other continental State save Holland; and the middle class was to provide the driving force and leadership of the revolution. The French *bourgeoisie* was not only deeply imbued with the ideas of Rousseau and of the Physiocrats, it also had every

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

reason for resenting the burdensome privileges of the nobles and the Church, which left it to bear far more than its share of national burdens that had been increased by unsuccessful wars.

A fourth reason was that the French peasantry were in a far healthier condition than the peasantry of central and eastern Europe. Serfdom had almost disappeared from France, though many oppressive and burdensome feudal customs still survived. The peasants, therefore, were not so abject as to be unable even to resent their wrongs; on the contrary, they were so ready for resistance that, as soon as the pressure of authority was removed, they broke out into *jacqueries*, attacking the chateaux of the nobles. Finally the Paris mob had always been restive and turbulent, always ready for *émeutes* which, unless firmly repressed, could terrorize and dominate the national government; and now they were excited by the heady doctrine of liberty. Time and again, during the early stages of the revolution, the Paris mob decided vital issues; notably when, on July 14th, 1789, they stormed the Bastille, that fortress and emblem of despotism.

Faced by a financial crisis which threatened national bankruptcy, the well-meaning King Louis XVI decided to take the nation into his confidence, and called a meeting of the States-General, which had not met for one hundred and seventy-five years. In the spring of 1789 the whole nation was agog with excitement. Members of all three orders in every province — nobles, clergy, and the 'third estate' of the common people, whose representatives were to be elected on a far more democratic basis than ever before — were busy drawing up statements of grievances. When the States-General met at Versailles, and, still more, when it was decided that voting was not to be 'by order' (which would have given the deciding voice to the two privileged orders of nobles and clergy), but was to be 'by heads' (from which it followed that the States-General was transformed into a

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

single great National Assembly, dominated by the more numerous members of the Third Estate), it became evident that a complete reconstruction of the whole political and social system was going to be carried out.

On this, indeed, the French nation was almost unanimously resolved; and the whole civilized world watched the unprecedented spectacle of a great nation, almost without division of class, setting to work upon the inspiring task of reorganizing its whole life upon the basis of liberty. In all history there has been no moment more touching or more inspiring than this, in which a great people, almost forgetting their conflicting interests, and all dominated by the same glorious if elusive vision, started out to translate into practice a great ideal. 'Tears of joy flowed from my eyes', said an unemotional conservative marquis when the States-General met; 'my God, my country and my fellow-citizens had become myself.' And when the poet Wordsworth looked back upon these noble beginnings from the storms and tumults that followed, he was constrained to say: 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very Heaven.' The thrill of a great emotion passed from France into all the neighbouring lands, into Belgium, into Germany, into Italy, into Britain.

Despite the outbreaks of turbulence which accompanied the revolution from the first, this great national resolve to turn the State into an embodiment of justice, freedom and brotherhood, made upon the minds and consciences of multitudes of people in all parts of Europe an indelible impression, which not even the horrors of the Reign of Terror, and the militarist frenzy that followed it, were able wholly to obliterate. Everywhere in Europe the new gospel of Liberty took possession of the minds of generous youth. Although the actual period of the revolutionary wars did not see the establishment of a single permanent parliamentary system, and although the revolution was (as it seemed) crushed out in

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

blood, its inspiration lasted throughout the nineteenth century, until it won its triumph in the almost universal establishment of democracy.

At first there seemed reason to hope, as in the first stages of the English resistance to Charles I, that it would be possible to win general 'consent' for a scheme of reorganization; but among a people who had enjoyed no experience in the difficult art of self-government, and who were carried away by a noble but exceedingly vague aspiration, full agreement was unattainable. Enthusiasm passed into fanaticism; tolerance for differences of opinion, without which free government cannot work, was banished; impatience for an immediate millennium led to tumults; and the sudden uprooting of accustomed authorities, and their replacement by brand-new institutions worked by wholly inexperienced men, brought chaos. Soon rival parties were denouncing one another as traitors, and sending one another to the guillotine; only a Reign of Terror availed to prevent the dissolution of French society.

In the first three years after the meeting of the States-General, France was left alone to shape her own destiny; the Governments of Europe, though they regarded her proceedings with alarm, were not prepared to intervene, and, indeed, did not do so until the revolutionary leaders, in their enthusiasm, and in the hope of unifying the nation, began to threaten an expansion of their methods to neighbouring lands. In these three years the leaders of the revolution attempted three great things.

In the first place, they embodied in a great document a declaration of human rights, and of the purposes which a well-ordered State should try to achieve; they spent upon this much time which might well have been used in taming the growing confusion. The new system which they were inaugurating was to be based, not upon expediency, but upon moral right. Vague and unpractical as was their declaration

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

of the Rights of Man, it was a challenge to the conscience of civilization, the echoes of which have not yet died out. For the first time, the assertion of lofty moral ideals was transferred from the philosopher's study to the dusty arena of politics.

In the second place, they swept away, at a single stroke, all the inherited privileges of caste and creed and province; and this part of their work was permanent. In one famous session of the National Assembly (Aug. 4th, 1789) spokesmen of the old privileged classes, amid unrestrained emotion, themselves renounced the privileges they had long enjoyed; and this was a demonstration of the 'consent' of the nation to fundamental changes.

Finally, they set up a complete system of democratic self-government, conceived in accordance with the ideas of philosophers who had no experience in practical affairs. Not only was France to be equipped with a legislature expressing the sovereignty of the people, but in all the departments which had replaced the old historic provinces, and in every one of the forty thousand communes or parishes of the country, fully organized representative government, almost uncontrolled from headquarters, was to take the place of the unqualified bureaucratic control which had hitherto existed. Henceforward almost all officials performing public functions, even the bishops and priests, were to be chosen by the people.

These changes were far too sudden and sweeping to have any chance of success among a people who had had no training whatever in the difficult arts of managing common affairs by discussion and agreement. As British experience had already shown, self-government can only work well among peoples who are habituated to the necessity of agreement through compromise, not only in public bodies, but in the management of a thousand private concerns, such as churches, clubs, trade unions, charitable organizations and



## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the like; and the French people had been denied this training through centuries of despotism.

The result, therefore, was chaotic disorganization. In the hope of overcoming these ills, awakening national ardour, and thus consolidating the revolution, the dominant party was ready to plunge into war; and the monarchs of Europe, already perturbed by the growing unrest among their subjects, were reluctantly compelled to take up the challenge. But when war had to be waged, the new-made institutions of self-government simply had to be swept aside. War exacts centralized control, at home as well as in the field, and only the most deeply-rooted of democracies can survive it. It was under the ruthless control of a Committee of Public Safety, working through local agents more autocratic than those of Louis XIV had ever been, that France thrust back the invaders, and then proceeded to overrun their territories.

This was the beginning of twenty-two years of warfare, amid which the infant institutions of democracy could not thrive. The Committee of Public Safety was succeeded by the Directorate, the Directorate by the Consulate, the Consulate by the Empire; and with each change the authority of the central power increased, until it culminated in the Empire of Napoleon, who wielded a more absolute authority over his subjects, and was served by a more efficient and omnipresent bureaucracy, than Louis XIV had ever known. It is true that, as a tribute to the revolutionary tradition, representative bodies were allowed to exist alongside of the real masters of the State; but at each stage, their powers were whittled down. Thus within ten years, as a consequence of its own violence and readiness to resort to war, the Revolution had created the most efficient and masterful dictatorship that Europe had ever seen. The great experiment seemed to have issued in failure.

Yet the fervour of belief in liberty, and even in political

## THE ERA OF REVOLUTION

democracy, did not die out. It seemed to be only the pressure of war which had rendered necessary the temporary supersession of the institutions of liberty. And the essential boon of equality before the law survived, even if self-government had become a sham, and even if freedom of the Press was as strictly repressed by Napoleon, as it always is by dictators. The electrifying power of liberty had been demonstrated by the extraordinary outburst of fervour which enabled France, in 1793, to thrust back her invaders on every side, and to pursue them into their own territories; and when France, feeling herself to be the chosen champion of liberty, proclaimed a crusade on behalf of all peoples and against all kings, the ideal of liberty became — what it had never been in its British, or even in its American form — a challenge to every constituted government which did not recognize and embody the sovereignty of the people.

Even when, under Napoleon, France became a conquering militarist empire, shamelessly aggressive and imposing its yoke upon half Europe, this apostolic fervour did not disappear. Napoleon preserved in France the democratic land system which had displaced feudalism. He brought to the countries he conquered the incalculable boon of equal and rational laws, based upon disregard of the distinctions of caste. And his soldiers and agents were still the apostles of the democratic idea; after all, each of them believed that he carried in his knapsack a field-marshal's baton, and that talent was no longer debarred by privilege from great careers.

Wherever they went, Napoleon's armies left behind them the seeds of liberty, and even their enemies in the field borrowed their ideas. Napoleon overran Spain, and the Spaniards resisted him with British aid; yet when the Spanish patriots set up a new constitution in 1812, they followed the French, not the British, model. Napoleon subjugated the greater part of Germany, and provoked the great national rising of 1813; but the first demand of the German

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

patriots was for political liberty, for which France had made them yearn, and they forced the King of Prussia himself to promise them a constitution. Even the Tsar of all the Russias was for a time indoctrinated with liberal ideas. His inspiration came from France, not from Britain, for it was not the practical convenience but the moral rightness of liberty that appealed to him.

The first French Revolution had thus failed to establish political liberty even within France itself, partly because the people were not ready for it, since self-government needs training; partly because it was based upon abstract theories, not upon practical experience; partly because it was too ready to resort to force, which is the eternal enemy of freedom. But it had established a real measure of social liberty, and destroyed the traditional privileges of feudalism. It had scattered over Europe the seeds of liberty, and raised before the eyes of the world an ideal which not even long wars could obliterate. It had prepared the way for the long and more prosaic struggles of the nineteenth century, which won a partial realization for this ideal, and which gave to the greater part of the world a steadily increasing wellbeing, a growing sense of human brotherhood, and an enlarging realization of what the service of liberty demanded.

## CHAPTER X

# EUROPE AND THE NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

### § I THE COLLAPSE OF EMPIRES

AMONG the great changes which followed from the era of revolution, not the least interesting was that it saw the dissolution of most of the European oversea empires. The eager competition of the western Powers for territory and influence in the non-European world practically came to an end.

In 1763 France had been compelled to cede to Britain her Canadian colonies, and to give up the hope of building an empire in India. She retained Louisiana, at the mouth of the Mississippi, a few West Indian islands, some posts in West Africa, and a couple of stations in India. But in 1803 Napoleon sold Louisiana, and the vast territories beyond the Mississippi, to the United States. French dreams of empire had come to an end; and though Napoleon tried to revive them, he had no success.

In 1782 Britain had been constrained to recognize the independence of her American colonies. Her first empire, the outcome of two centuries of effort, had broken up in bitterness.

During the Napoleonic wars, the Dutch lost to Britain South Africa and Ceylon as well as Java, the heart of her eastern empire. When peace was made in 1815, Britain paid £6,000,000 for the retention of South Africa, a vital calling-station on the way to India. This is one of the rare instances of a victorious Power paying for a conquest made in war. She also restored Java, without price, and this enabled the

## THE COLLAPSE OF EMPIRES

Dutch to build up anew their eastern empire. But they had now no colonial ambitions beyond this.

When Napoleon conquered Spain, the Spanish colonies in South and Central America revolted, and set up as independent republics, which were recognized by Britain. After Napoleon had been overthrown, the Powers of Europe talked about forcing the rebellious colonies to return to their allegiance. But the British fleet, and the American Monroe Doctrine, which was first promulgated on this occasion, stood in the way. The Spanish colonists, unused to liberty, fell into a state of anarchy. But they retained their independence; the Spanish Empire, like the French, had dissolved.

It is not surprising that the European peoples, in face of this series of *débâcles*, should have drawn the conclusion that oversea possessions were not worth the cost and the trouble of acquiring and maintaining them. 'Colonies are like fruits', said Turgot, the French philosopher and statesman, 'they cling to the mother-tree only until they are ripe.' During the sixty years after the Napoleonic wars, the States of Europe were too much engrossed in revolutions and wars to spare any attention for the non-European world.

Britain alone was left. She was the supreme mistress of the seas. Her ten thousand ships, more numerous than those of the rest of Europe put together, traded with every corner of the earth. Her machines provided her with cheap products which all the world was ready to buy, and her lead in industry was so great that it took half a century for other countries to begin to overhaul her. Her missionaries were at work in all the backward regions, making her name everywhere known as the supreme representation of civilization. Her rapidly growing population needed new homes. If she desired to do so, it was in her power to build up a vast new empire. In this period she did not desire to do so, because most of her rulers shared the view, which her own experience seemed to support, that colonies would not long remain loyal to the

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

mother country, and that all the cost and effort of nurturing them would be wasted.

Nevertheless circumstances compelled her, almost in her own despite, to build up a new empire, more gigantic and more varied in character than that which she had lost. For the best part of a century she enjoyed almost a monopoly of colonization, and was the supreme agent for the extension of western civilization, and of the liberty which is its vital element, over the face of the globe.

Before we turn to consider the working of the ideas of the revolution in Europe during the nineteenth century, it will be well to consider how Britain used these great opportunities, and how far she contributed to the extension of civilization and of liberty, not only during the era of revolution, but also during the era of unrest and reconstruction in Europe which followed it.

When, about 1880, the European States escaped from their preoccupations, and began to think again about the non-European world, they found that, mainly under the aegis of Britain and the United States, western civilization and political liberty had been established over important parts of the earth's surface. They found also that a system of liberty had been established in North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The aspect of the world had changed. Europe was no longer the sole home of western civilization, and the disputes of her sundered and jealous peoples no longer formed the only stuff of history.

### § 2 THE UNITED STATES: LAND OF FREEDOM

The most remarkable achievement of this period was the expansion of the United States. After the War of Independence, the thirteen colonies had obtained control of all the fertile lands as far west as the Mississippi. In 1803, by

## UNITED STATES: LAND OF FREEDOM

the Louisiana Purchase, she acquired from France the whole of the rich plain between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains, and in 1819 she purchased Florida from Spain, thus getting rid of the last remnants of European power (other than British) on the North American continent. In 1835 the great province of Texas revolted from Mexico, and was admitted in 1845 as a State of the Union. This was followed by a war with Mexico, which was forced to cede the whole of the south-west, including California. Meanwhile, the north-western part of the modern territory of the United States (known as the Oregon territory) had been, for a number of years, jointly occupied by Britain and the States. This arrangement was terminated in 1846 by an agreement between the two countries, which fixed, without conflict, the western part of the boundary between the United States and the British realm of Canada. In less than sixty years from the conclusion of the War of Independence, the United States had become a vast realm that stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific, an empire lavishly supplied with every resource that was needed for a great modern State.

The Oregon treaty was one of a series of peaceful agreements whereby the boundary between the two great communities of Anglo-Saxon stock was determined. It is a boundary 3000 miles long, unguarded by forts or by soldiers: an exemplar to the rest of the world of how peace can be made secure between free societies.

More remarkable than the extension of territory was the way in which this vast realm was populated. When the United States began its existence as an independent nation, its people were practically limited to the Atlantic seaboard, and numbered less than 4,000,000, including half a million negro slaves. In 1880, less than a century later, they numbered more than 50,000,000 — a population far greater than that of Britain; and it was spread over the whole of the vast territory whose acquisition we have described.

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

There is no parallel in modern history to this immense movement of population. It was the result of a vast trek of adventurous pioneers, setting forth into the wilderness to find new homes. It was not planned or directed by Government, but was due to the spontaneous initiative of a free and adventurous people. As the gigantic movement went on, the Federal Government turned each new area into a recognized Territory, under some degree of federal control. But soon the Territories claimed, and received, the full self-governing rights of States within the Union. By 1880 the number of self-governing States had risen from the original thirteen to thirty-seven.

Whence came the great population that flowed over this immense area? It came only in a minor degree from the natural increase of the population. Mainly, it was due to immigration on a gigantic scale, at first chiefly from Britain, which also provided much of the capital for the opening up of the whole territory by railways. Then Irish immigrants became very numerous, fleeing from the famine conditions that existed in Ireland in 1822 and in 1845. Then Germans came in large numbers, escaping from the tyranny that reigned in most of the German States, especially after the failure of the revolution of 1848. Soon emigrants from most of the European States began to pour in. They came because they saw in America a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of opportunity, and, above all, a land of freedom — freedom of movement, freedom of enterprise, freedom of thought, freedom of belief. Beyond doubt or question it was the liberty which the United States offered to all comers, even more than the country's wealth, which brought the population that filled up these wide and fertile lands. America was a place of refuge for the oppressed and the downtrodden of many lands.

This immense immigration imposed upon the United States a very difficult problem. The country had become a



## UNITED STATES: LAND OF FREEDOM

melting-pot of diverse peoples, who had somehow to be moulded into unity. National feeling was always strong in the United States, and sometimes expressed itself in an exaggerated contempt for the 'effete monarchies' of the old world. But, with all these representatives of different races, there was never any danger that American nationalism would be defiled by the 'racialism' which poisoned it in some European countries.

The dominant factor in the moulding of this mixture of races came from the traditions which America had inherited from Britain. Men of British descent continued to play the leading part in guiding the fortunes of this great free society, though there was no attempt to exclude men of other stocks. The English language was the common tongue of all, and foreign immigrants soon learnt to use it as their own — and to enrich or diversify it with new locutions. English literature, which is pre-eminently the literature of freedom, was their common inheritance. The English Common Law was the foundation of their legal system, however much it had to be adjusted to meet new conditions.

But there was one vital element of a system of liberty which the United States long delayed adopting. Slavery was recognized and upheld by the laws of all the Southern States, and even the Northern States had to admit it, and to hand over runaway slaves to their masters. As the great republic extended its territory, and admitted one new State after another, there was incessant controversy as to whether slavery should be recognized in the new States; for the Southerners feared lest their type of civilization, which rested upon slavery, should be swamped by the growing wealth and population of the free States. A powerful abolitionist movement grew up in the Northern States, and slaves were smuggled in large numbers into Canada, where, on British soil, they became free.

A serious cleavage between two distinct types of social

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

organization was thus emerging; it threatened to break up the unity of the United States; for, as Abraham Lincoln declared, the republic could not exist 'half-slave and half-free'. But the rights of the States under the constitution made it impossible that slavery should be abolished even by a majority of the whole people. The knot was cut when the Southern States, fearing the growing pressure of the North, and alarmed by the election to the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln, a known hater of slavery, claimed the right to secede, and to form a separate Union. On the question whether secession could be permitted or not — and not directly on the question of slavery — a fierce and destructive civil war was fought from 1861 to 1865. It ended in the defeat of the South, and in the adoption of an amendment to the constitution making slavery illegal in the United States.

This desperate and heroic struggle, led by the greatest and wisest of all Americans, Abraham Lincoln, removed a dark stain from the escutcheon of American liberty, thirty years after slavery had been abolished throughout the British Empire, thanks to the greater elasticity of the British Constitution. An interval of acute distress and suffering followed for the Southern States. But it did not last long. The tide of immigration was still flowing; the railway age had begun, and the country was being rapidly opened up; and a period of great industrial development brought abounding prosperity to the South as well as to the North.

By 1880 the United States was already among the greatest and most prosperous of the States in whose hands lay the destinies of western civilization; and, along with Britain and her daughter lands, she offered to the rest of the world an exemplar of what liberty could achieve for the progress of civilization. Unhappily the tradition of isolation from the affairs of Europe was so strong among her people that they felt little or no sense of responsibility for the fortunes of the civilization of which their country had now become one of the leaders.

## SECOND BRITISH EMPIRE

### §3 POLITICAL LIBERTY IN THE SECOND BRITISH EMPIRE

While the United States was establishing the system of liberty from ocean to ocean, the Second British Empire was coming into being. It was to be marked by two features: the steady growth of political liberty in all lands that were ready for it, and the adoption, in dealing with other peoples, of the more generous ideas that had been inspired by the humanitarian movement.

Canada offered the first test. When the French settlers on the St. Lawrence were brought under British rule in 1763, they were promised self-governing rights; but they had never been used to them, and did not want them. Their Roman Catholic faith, and the privileges of their Church, were guaranteed; this formed a ground of bitter complaint among the New Englanders. The civil law of France, to which they were accustomed, was preserved; but English criminal law, with trial by jury, was introduced. There was to be no religious persecution, and no attempt to enforce uniformity of method, in the new British Empire.

After the American War of Independence, thousands of Loyalists, sacrificing everything in order to remain under the British flag, poured into Canada, and with the help of substantial government grants, settled in the maritime provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and in Upper Canada, or Ontario. No attempt was made to use them as a means of forcing the French settlers into a British mould. On the contrary, in 1791 Quebec, Ontario, and the maritime provinces were all endowed with representative institutions. They all had elected Parliaments, and executives appointed by the crown. Thus within ten years of the loss of the American colonies, new colonies, endowed with representative institutions, had been instituted. The fact that self-government had brought about rebellion in the first empire was not to be

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

allowed to impair the loyalty of Britain to the system of political liberty.

Friction arose in all the colonies between the legislatures and the executives, which they did not control; there was also friction between the French and British colonists. This led, in 1837, to rebellions, which were easily subdued. But repression was not enough. Lord Durham was sent out to examine the situation; and in a masterly Report which is one of the classics of colonial government, he contended that what was wrong was not that the colonists had been given too much liberty, but that they had not been given enough. They must be enabled to feel that they were themselves *responsible* for the future of their country; and to ensure this it was laid down that in each colony the executive should be responsible to the legislature.

Many thought this was a dangerous experiment. But the result was that friction came to an end. In a few years the inhabitants of the various colonies were consulting about the possibility of federation; and in 1867 they were linked in a federal union under the name of the Dominion of Canada. To this new and free government Britain transferred her claims over the vast and unexplored regions of the north-west, the boundaries of which had been determined by peaceful negotiations with the United States. Settlers spread into this great and fertile region, which stretched to the Pacific coast of British Columbia. Presently they were linked together by the construction of a great trans-continental railway; and when the Canadian Pacific Railway was opened in 1880 the structure of a great new federal State of vast potential resources was completed.

Many expected that the Dominion of Canada would soon be united with its powerful neighbour, the United States, from which it was separated by an unguarded frontier of 3000 miles. But the system of government which the Canadians freely adopted was based upon the British rather

## SECOND BRITISH EMPIRE

than the American model. Whereas in America the executive and the legislature are independent of one another, in accordance with Montesquieu's principle of the separation of powers, in Canada the executive is directly responsible to the legislature; and this prevents deadlocks, and makes swift action possible. Canada, having free choice (for it would have been impossible to prevent her junction with the United States, had she desired it) preferred to remain a member of the British Commonwealth of free nations, even if this drew her into the complications of European politics, as it has actually done. Unlike the United States, but like the other British dominions, Canada feels, through her link with Britain, a sense of common responsibility for the welfare of the civilization of which she is a member, and for the preservation of liberty in the world.

The second great field of British colonizing activity was Australia. That remote antipodean continent had been mapped out by the great British explorer, Captain Cook; and when the American Revolution deprived Britain of what had hitherto been the dumping ground for her convicts, this distant land was chosen as a substitute. Soon other settlers began to appear, to grow sheep on the rolling Australian plains. Systematic colonization reinforced them in several parts of the continent, land being sold by the crown and the proceeds used to pay for the transport of settlers. The transportation of prisoners was brought to an end, when the penal code of Britain became more humane. Gold was discovered, and brought an inrush of prospectors and others. Soon there were half a dozen distinct colonies round the fringes of the continent, each endowed with the rudimentary institutions of self-government. In 1850 the British Government invited each of these colonies to frame their own systems of responsible government; and in 1855 these schemes were endorsed by the British Parliament. All of them chose to model their systems upon that of Britain, with govern-

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

ments responsible to their Parliaments, and therefore capable of being easily changed, and of acting rapidly. Complete political liberty had thus been established in Australia, as in Canada.

The development of the lovely land of New Zealand came later. Here some missionaries had settled among the Maori natives; and there was a drift of unruly sailors, South Sea traders, and escaped convicts, who needed to be kept in order. It was to perform this task that Britain annexed New Zealand in 1840, under the Treaty of Waitangi negotiated with the Maoris. Bands of colonists were brought out from Britain, under a scheme of systematic colonization. The new colony had its troubles, notably wars with the chivalrous and war-loving Maoris. But it thrived from the first; like the other Dominions it was endowed with full powers of responsible self-government, and framed its system, like Canada and Australia, on the British model.

In South Africa alone there was, from the first, difficulty and strife. Here there were two races to be dealt with: the Dutch Boers, whose ancestors had dwelt in the country since the seventeenth century; and the Kaffirs and other coloured peoples, who greatly outnumbered the white population. The Boers still clung to the ideas of the seventeenth century regarding the unalterable inferiority of the negroes, and thought that slavery was their natural lot. The British came to South Africa with the new ideas of the humanitarian age, and with them came many missionaries, who made it their duty to uphold the rights of the subject races. The enforced emancipation of their slaves was a subject of bitter resentment among the Boers, especially as the compensation paid to them was inadequate. This was the principal reason for the Great Trek of 1836, wherein, with wonderful courage, some thousands of Boers emigrated into the interior, and conquered for themselves, from dangerous enemies, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

## SECOND BRITISH EMPIRE

This conflict of ideas regarding the treatment of the native peoples was, indeed, the main cause of friction between the two white races. British administrators were at a loss to know how to deal with the two Boer States. On the whole, they left them alone. But there was always a fear lest the Boers might precipitate conflicts with the large negro population — as, indeed, they not infrequently did. To guard against this danger, a ring of protected native States was set up, of which Basutoland alone to-day survives, in which the native population were to be left free to live in their own way. This experiment, however, was not a success, because, while the stoppage of warfare led to a great increase of the native populations, they were not being trained to make the best use of their land.

This constant friction delayed the establishment of full self-government in South Africa. Cape Colony, indeed, the oldest of the settlements, was contented and prosperous; here and in the neighbouring territory of Natal large numbers of British settlers arrived, and found it not difficult to maintain friendly relations with their Boer neighbours. Cape Colony obtained full responsible government in 1872, and limited rights of franchise were even conceded to the native population. But for the disturbing influence of the two Boer States, and especially of the Transvaal, there might have been settlement and peace. British administration strove in vain to win agreement for a project of federation, including the Boer States; but the Transvaal Boers, fearful of losing their independence, would have nothing to do with it. They were in an anarchic condition, almost bankrupt, and on bad terms with the formidable native power of the Zulus. In the hope of preventing the outbreak of a Boer-Zulu war, a Natal official rashly proclaimed the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877. But the Zulu war came, and Britain had to fight it, and fought it badly. When it was over, the Transvaal Boers revolted. They won a slight success at Majuba, and thought

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

they had defeated Britain. In spite of this, the British Government, not desiring to rule unwilling subjects, cancelled the annexation; and the Transvaal became an independent State owing only a nominal suzerainty to Britain.

The vexed story of South Africa is the least satisfactory aspect of British colonial history. But it was not a story of tyranny. The long friction was due to a clash between two white peoples at different stages of civilization, largely over the question of how backward peoples should be treated; and if Britain pursued a wavering policy and made many blunders, she was at least striving after justice. If she had either accepted the Boer view of native rights, or forced the Boers into submission, she might have been more successful; but either of these courses would have been in conflict with the accepted principles of her colonial policy — self-government for civilized peoples, and protection for the rights of primitive peoples. In South Africa, and there alone, these two principles came into sharp conflict.

Nevertheless, the period of British supremacy had, by 1880, achieved some results of value. Cape Colony enjoyed the full rights of self-government; Natal was well on the way to them; and the two Boer republics, instead of being forced into submission, as they might easily have been, were free and independent States.

Thus the era of British supremacy had seen the establishment of a fully developed system of liberty in four of the areas, outside Europe, where European civilization could thrive. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were, indeed, the only large regions (apart from the United States and South America) in which white men could thrive. In all of them liberty was now so firmly rooted that, whence-soever future immigrants might come, they would be unlikely to disturb it. This was an immense contribution to the diffusion of liberty throughout the world, and to its identification with civilization.



## THE MORE BACKWARD REGIONS

### §4 THE MORE BACKWARD REGIONS

During the long era of British supremacy, Britain had surprisingly little to do with the backward peoples, over whom the European peoples were later to compete eagerly for power. She had a few strips of coastland in West Africa, a protectorate over the greater part of the Malay Peninsula, and a few island groups in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. With these may be included Jamaica and other West Indian islands, British Guiana and Honduras, where a small white population lived among a majority of ex-negro slaves. In these lands the self-governing rights which the white population had enjoyed since the seventeenth century were abandoned, after the slaves had been emancipated, because it was impossible either to put power into the hands of the newly-emancipated, or to leave it in the hands of their former masters. These lands therefore became 'Crown Colonies', like the backward territories; and supreme control was resumed by the British Government.

This power was exercised — no doubt with lapses, but on the whole consistently — in the spirit which had been inspired by the humanitarian movement and by the missionaries. The colonies were to be regarded not merely as valuable properties, but as trusts, to be administered in the interests of the subject peoples. Their rights and their traditional usages were to be respected, in so far as they were not barbarous or inhumane. They were to be protected against exploitation by European traders. They were to know no more of slavery or of war, the ills from which they had suffered since time was young. They were to be given the boon of just and equal laws, impartially administered. They were to be led patiently into the ways of civilization, given opportunities of education and self-development, and enabled to train themselves in the difficult art of self-government. These were

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

high ideals, and they were not always fully attained; but no one who has studied British colonial history during the nineteenth century can doubt that they were honestly pursued. The foundations of liberty, which are peace, security and equal laws, were being laid in those of the backward lands which Britain controlled.

Perhaps it was for this reason that the British Government was besieged by petitions from native populations to be taken under her protection. The petitions came from many quarters, from the chieftains of Pacific Islands and of African tribes. Notably such petitions came from the peoples of all the lands which were subsequently annexed by Germany — from the Cameroons, from South-West Africa, from East Africa. Britain could, indeed, without effort or expenditure, have made herself mistress during this period of a very large part of the earth. She refused to do so, firmly rejecting almost all these petitions because she did not wish to extend further her already immense responsibilities.

Another aspect of British colonial policy during this period of practical monopoly deserves to be noted. Britain had adopted, for her own advantage, the policy of Free Trade. She extended it to all territories under her direct control, including the self-governing colonies until they became complete masters of their own affairs, and including also the vast empire of India. This means that the traders of all countries were admitted to these vast territories on the same terms as British traders; there was no attempt to create a monopoly. The consequence was that no jealousies or fears were aroused by additions to the British Empire; because every such addition was a new realm open to trade, and governed in a civilized way. By pursuing this policy Britain was in fact acting as a trustee on behalf of the whole civilized world, as well as on behalf of her subjects.

These things are not said in a spirit of boastfulness. They are a plain record of historical fact. They were the outcome

## THE INDIAN EMPIRE

of the process of development which we have tried to trace in the foregoing chapters.

### §5 THE INDIAN EMPIRE

The most amazing achievement of the period of British ascendancy was the conquest and organization of the Indian Empire. One of the great civilizations which we described in an earlier chapter was brought completely under the influence of the west; and one-sixth of the human race, including peoples of many races, tongues, religions and grades of civilization, was brought into a single vast dominion among whose peoples peace reigned.

What made this achievement doubly remarkable was that the home authorities — the East India Company and the British Government — never wanted it, but protested against, and strove to prevent, every successive stage in the conquest. It was an empire won, in Sir John Seeley's phrase, 'in a fit of absence of mind'.

The East India Company was a trading concern, which wanted only to carry on its trade. But in 1763, having dethroned a tyrant who had attacked its trading station, the Company found itself the dominant power in the province of Bengal. It refused to accept the responsibility of government; it enjoyed power without responsibility. Its agents in India, who were paid only nominal retaining salaries, and were expected to make their livelihood by private trade, abused their opportunities shamefully; and in this period the British power was a mere curse to the people of Bengal. Much the same conditions existed in southern India, round Madras.

Then a very great man, Warren Hastings, took over the responsibility of government, reorganized the system, paid good salaries to the Company's administrative officers, and laid the foundations of a sound system of law and of protection

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

for the rights of the peasantry. He did this in face of terrible obstacles, but he turned Bengal into the best governed province in India; and this was the real foundation of British rule. During the American Revolutionary War, Hastings had to face a dangerous combination of the strongest Indian powers, stimulated and supported by France. He defeated his enemies. He made no conquests, but, while most of India was ravaged by war, no hostile army ever crossed the frontiers of Bengal. Hastings also tried to build up a series of alliances with the chief Indian States, which would give to India a sort of 'collective security' against war. In spite of these achievements, when he returned to England Hastings was impeached (and acquitted) for alleged misconduct. The impeachment was a real injustice; but it showed that the conscience of Britain was being stirred. Henceforward the British Government exercised a large degree of control over the proceedings of the East India Company. Hasting's successors went out with strict injunctions that there were to be no further conquests, and no treaties with Indian powers.

The attempt to carry out this policy convinced the plundering tyrants who ruled the greater part of India that the British power was contemptible. During the French Revolutionary wars, a new and formidable combination amongst them was again fomented by France. Fortune placed in control of the British power a very able man, the Marquess Wellesley. He defeated his most formidable foes; he annexed large territories to keep them in check; and he brought a number of the greater native States into 'subsidiary alliances' which made them dependent upon the British power. In a few years he had almost turned the British Empire *in* India into the British Empire *of* India. But before he could complete his work, he was hurriedly recalled by the East India Company, which was alarmed by this enormous increase of its responsibilities. The Maratha princes, who lived by plunder, were left undisturbed. But this restlessness brought

## THE INDIAN EMPIRE

on another war, which ended in their subjection. After this, the lands under direct British rule were greatly extended, every petty prince willingly came into dependent alliance, and the British *raj* extended from the Sutlej and the Indus to Cape Comorin.

A later series of wars, caused by threats from Russia through Afghanistan and by the restlessness of the Sikh warriors in the north-west, brought the empire to its natural frontiers in the mountain ranges in the north-west; while in the east large parts of Burma were annexed as the result of wars initiated by Burmese kings. In regard to some of these wars, notably the conquest of Sindh, it can be maintained that Britain was guilty of aggression; but most of them, and the annexations which followed from them, were justified by the necessity of preserving the security of the lands already under British rule.

Meanwhile vast labours of reconstruction had been carried out. Administration had been made efficient, and cleansed from corruption. A system of law, based upon Indian customs, was impartially administered. Education on western lines was introduced. There was very little interference with Indian customs, save that cruel usages such as the burnings of widows were prohibited. Missionaries came in, in large numbers, and were active especially in educational work. It was laid down, in 1833, that no man should be debarred by race, colour or religion from holding any office for which he was qualified; and although this principle was tardily and grudgingly applied, it implied a return to the methods of Warren Hastings, and a reversal of the principle laid down after his recall, that no Indian should be appointed to a position of responsibility. The equipment of India with the material resources of western civilization was begun. Roads were built; irrigation began; telegraphs were constructed; and systematic plans of railway development were laid down.

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

These changes were too rapid for the conservative Indian mind. They contributed to create an unrest which was the background of the military mutiny of 1857. After that outbreak, the East India Company was dissolved; and the British Government and Parliament undertook the final responsibility for the government of the India Empire. It carried on this work through the agency of a highly efficient and quite uncorrupt bureaucracy, the Indian Civil Service, recruited from among the best products of the British universities; but under them all the detailed work of government was conducted by Indian officials. A small army, less than that of many minor European powers, and containing more Indian than British soldiers, served to safeguard the peace of this vast empire, which was protected from invasion by the power of the British fleet.

What were the results, to the peoples of India, of this amazing achievement? It cannot be claimed that they were endowed, like Canada or Australia, with the rights of self-government: they had never known any semblance of it in their history, and the immense variety of races, tongues, religions, castes and grades of civilization made the development of such a system more difficult than in any other region of the world. But enlightened Englishmen, from a very early date, proclaimed that this must be the goal of endeavour. Such a one was Sir Thomas Munro, a great administrator, who wrote, as early as 1824, that the British power in India would only be justified if it enabled Indians to manage their own affairs; and this, he said, would only be possible when the under-dog, accustomed for thousands of years to submit to oppression, took courage to claim the rights which the law strove to secure for him.

But in the meantime, British control secured for India certain essential foundations for a system of liberty. It gave to that vast land, for the first time in its long history, political unity. It put an end to the ceaseless wars which foreign

## THE INDIAN EMPIRE

invaders and the restless ambitions of princes had inflicted upon it: unbroken peace reigned from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin; an army guarded the passes of the north-west through which a long series of conquerors had come; and the British navy held the seas. Equal and impartial laws took the place of the arbitrary decrees and punishments of petty despots. Political unity, peace and law: these are the very foundations of liberty; and under their shelter there was freedom of movement, freedom of enterprise (so far as the ancient caste system permitted), freedom of belief and worship, freedom of thought and speech.

Moreover, the English language, which was eagerly acquired by the educated classes in every part of India, gave to the users of languages that were twice as numerous as those of Europe, a common medium of communication, such as Latin had been to the diverse peoples of Medieval Europe, and so made possible the rise of a sense of common interest and of an Indian national sentiment. And, through the English language, the educated classes were brought into contact with English literature, which is pre-eminently the literature of liberty. The writer was once discussing with an eminent Indian Nationalist the undue emphasis which (in the writer's view) was laid upon English in the Indian educational system. 'Whatever else we may do', came the reply, 'we must not touch our boys' access to English literature. It is the literature of liberty, and it has put into our minds the idea of freedom, which we never had before.'

Whatever the defects of British rule in India, and they have doubtless been many, it has been no mean achievement to lay the foundations upon which a system of liberty could arise, and to have implanted in the minds of peoples long habituated to servitude the aspiration after freedom. In 1880, when the era of British monopoly came to an end, this aspiration was beginning to ferment in certain elements of

## EUROPE AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLD

the Indian peoples. It had vast difficulties to overcome; but the story of its development belongs to a later chapter.

Upon the whole then, and in spite of all defects and limitations, in spite of the rather arrogant self-complacency which marked British policy during this era, the era of British monopoly had seen great achievements in the extension of western civilization, and of the liberty which is its vital element, throughout the world.

It had seen the planting of great, free, self-governing communities in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa—half-empty lands, where immigrants from the crowded countries of the old world could enjoy the priceless boon of liberty. It had seen the substitution of the principle of trusteeship for the baser aim of mere ownership in the government of backward peoples—trusteeship for the rights of the subject peoples who were to be led patiently into the ways of civilization, trusteeship also for the interests of all the civilized peoples, who were given free access to the vast resources which these lands contained. It had seen the awakening of the great and ancient civilization of India, and its introduction to the civilization of the West, and had secured for its peoples the essential foundations of liberty—political unity, peace, and the reign of law—and, with these, the birth of an aspiration after liberty.

This was no mean achievement. The astonishing growth of the Second British Empire was not merely an expression of power-politics. It did not depend upon military strength, though sea-power upheld it; it had no central compulsive power to hold it together, but depended upon the willing loyalty of its members, and could not survive if this loyalty was lacking. Its growth was, in fact, a real contribution to the development of civilization and of liberty, and a demonstration that a multitude of diverse peoples could live together in peace and freedom.



## CHAPTER XI

# THE AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION IN EUROPE, 1815-1850

### §1 A PERIOD OF REPRESSION

WHEN the four Great Powers, Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia, whose combined effort had overthrown Napoleon, had seen him safely packed off to St. Helena, they thought that the madness of revolution had burnt itself out, and that Europe might now settle down to a long era of peace under the old restored regime. They honestly desired peace, and thought it could be made permanent. Their method was that every State in Europe, great and small, should be pledged to observe the treaty settlement they had just reached; that the Great Powers should hold frequent conferences to deal with any threatening possibility of trouble which might arise; and, above all, that a careful watch should be kept for all movements which suggested a revival of revolutionism, and that the Powers should act together promptly, and crush any such movement before it had time to develop.

This, at any rate, was the view of three of the Powers, Austria, Russia and Prussia — all despotisms. Britain, however, had misgivings, although she was herself passing through a period of reaction. She was willing to take part in conferences for the settlement of difficulties. These were useful; they were, indeed, the beginning of what came to be known as the Concert of Europe, which went on working, with considerable success, down to the outbreak of the war of 1914. But when it came to intervening in the internal affairs of States for the purpose of suppressing what the

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

despots chose to regard as revolutionary movements, it was another matter. Britain maintained that every country should be free to settle its own affairs. She could not wage wars against all the despots to prevent them from intervening in the affairs of other countries on the continent of Europe; but when they proposed to force the Spanish colonies to return to their allegiance, in 1822, her naval power made her negative effective. Within seven years of the peace-settlement, Britain had separated herself from what her foreign secretary called 'a league of despots to keep Europe in chains'. Meanwhile France had been admitted to the Concert, when she had paid off the modest indemnity imposed upon her; and when this happened, in 1818, it was announced that 'the era of permanent peace had arrived'. Until 1830 France played the obedient jackal to the despots; and Britain was isolated.

But the possibility of permanent peace did not depend upon the will of the despots. It depended upon the answers to two questions. Was the peace settlement a just one? And had the ideas and aspirations created by the revolution really been destroyed?

Some features of the peace settlement were sound and reasonable. The masters of Europe had the good sense to realize that, even if France had scattered the seeds of revolution everywhere and kept Europe at war for twenty-two years, she was an essential element in the European system, and there would be no peace until she was able once more to play her part on equal terms. Her territory was not cut down; and she was only called upon to pay a modest indemnity. If the masters of Europe a century later had shown the same moderation and good sense in dealing with Germany, from what distresses might not the world have been saved!

The peacemakers also showed some sense of the growing strength of national feeling when they created a kingdom of

## A PERIOD OF REPRESSION

Poland, with a free constitution, and thus partially undid the cruel wrongs of the partitions of 1773, 1792, and 1795. But the Polish kingdom was conferred on the Tsar of Russia; and Russia kept its promises for only fifteen years. The Poles rose in rebellion time and again, but they were far from any possible helpers, and their rebellions were mercilessly crushed. Poland remained under the stifling tyranny of Russia until 1918; and during all that time exiled Poles were active in all the underground conspiracies which were going on in other parts of Europe. Repression by force cannot destroy the aspiration after freedom.

In other respects the peace settlement had many defects. It imposed a forced union upon Belgium and Holland; it cut off Norway from Denmark and transferred it to Sweden, in compensation for Finland, seized by Russia: peoples were handed from one master to another, without any pretence of consulting their wishes. Both Germany and Italy were left in a state of division, Germany divided into thirty-nine States and Italy into seven, though in both countries the national spirit had been stimulated by the revolutionary wars. Nearly all these provisions were to be torn up in the next half-century, mainly by the action of the Great Powers themselves.

Although the despots thought they had destroyed the revolutionary movement, and could prevent its revival, it was still working, though now underground. But when a movement is driven underground, and is therefore not exposed to public discussion, it is apt to become more rather than less dangerous.

Three aspects of this revolutionary ferment may be distinguished. They were sometimes in conflict with one another, but usually they were in harmony, united by a common hatred of the existing order.

First among them, and most important, was the demand for political liberty, for freedom of thought and speech,

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

freedom of enterprise and freedom of intercourse, and, above all, for the control of Governments by the popular will. This demand, which descended directly from the revolution, came to be known as the 'Liberal' movement, and was regarded as highly dangerous by the despots. Curiously enough, the name 'Liberal' came from Spain, a country which has been tragically unsuccessful in achieving the thing.

Next there was the demand for national freedom and unity among subject or divided peoples: notably the Germans, the Italians, the Belgians, the Poles, the Hungarians, the Czechs, the Greeks. We have seen in earlier chapters the importance of the growth of a national spirit in the countries of western Europe. But nobody, until this time, had ever propounded the doctrine that every nation, just because it was a nation, had a right to be free and to be united. The doctrine of nationalism had not been preached by the apostles of the revolution; but it was a natural outcome of their theory that peoples ought to be organized and governed in accordance with their wishes. It was in the first half of the nineteenth century that nationalism found its great prophet, in the Italian Mazzini. He was an ardent Liberal as well as a nationalist; and he had a vision of a Europe which should consist of a brotherhood of free and peaceful nations. Nationalism aroused yet stronger passions in subject or divided countries than even Liberalism.

In the third place, there was beginning to appear a new demand for a large social reconstruction which should secure to the mass of labouring men the material well-being that seemed to be enjoyed only by the few. The theory of Socialism — the theory that this equalization could only be achieved if the State took over the control of production and distribution — originated in Britain, the home of the industrial revolution: in many ways the English socialist writers of the 'twenties and 'thirties of the nineteenth century

## A SERIES OF REVOLUTIONS

anticipated all the main lines of later Socialist thought. But there were also a number of Socialist writers in France and some in Germany; in the French Revolution of 1848 the Socialist theories of Louis Blanc played an important part, and caused a great deal of confusion. As yet, however, Socialism did not count for much, not even when the famous German Jew, K  rl Marx, issued the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848: his more important work, *Das Kapital*, was to be produced much later, under the protection of free England. Probably even enthusiasts felt that not much could be done until the character of Governments had been changed by the establishment of democracy; and it was not until this had been done that the Socialist movement again gained strength.

These three movements, then, and especially Liberalism and Nationalism, produced a series of revolutionary upheavals between 1815 and 1850, which were fomented by underground conspiracies. These conspiracies were at their height between 1830 and 1848. Their centres were in London, Paris and Switzerland, where free conditions enabled the conspirators to meet. They culminated in the great revolution of 1848, which for a moment seemed to be victorious all over Europe, except in Russia; but it was mastered within a year, and by 1850 the period of overt revolution was at an end. It had served its purpose. It had converted the Governments to the view that mere repression was futile; and a new period opened in which the system of liberty won remarkable victories in every part of Europe except Russia and Turkey. Revolution by violence had failed; nevertheless the ideas of the revolution had achieved success.

##   2 A SERIES OF REVOLUTIONS

It is unnecessary for our purpose to narrate the course of the revolutionary risings between 1815 and 1850. It will be

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

enough to note how they became progressively more formidable and how their range was widened; and to note also the extensions of liberty which resulted from them.

There were three main spasms of revolution, each more violent than its predecessor, and each affecting a number of countries. The first was in the 'twenties, the second in 1830, the third in 1848.

In 1820 there were risings in Spain, Portugal, Naples and Sicily, and northern Italy. They were all crushed by the action of the Powers, though in Spain the rebels for a time forced the king to accept the democratic constitution that had been established in 1812. Spain, the land from which the very name 'Liberal' came, was compelled by the Powers to resign itself to the brutal tyranny of the restored Bourbons, and this was the beginning of a century of confusion, misgovernment and civil war for that unhappy land.

In 1821 the Greeks revolted against the Turks, and a confused and merciless struggle raged for some years. The Greeks were aided by volunteers from the west, inspired by the old glories of Hellas; the most famous among them being the English poet Byron. As the Turkish dominions were not covered by the Vienna Treaty, there was no reason why the Powers should intervene to suppress the rising. Sympathy with the Greeks was so strong that in 1829, to save them from destruction, Britain, France and Russia took joint action, destroyed the Turkish fleet at Navarino, drove the Turks out of Greece, and established the independence of Greece under their joint protection. Though not a breach of the Vienna settlement, this was the first triumph of the national principle.

The revolutions of 1830 had more important results. They began in France. The restored Bourbons, though they had granted a Charter and set up a rather ineffectual Parliament, were acting as autocrats. A sudden *émeute* in Paris overthrew them, and, in imitation of the English

## A SERIES OF REVOLUTIONS

Revolution of 1688, substituted a younger branch of the Bourbon line which drew its authority from Parliament, not from divine right. France was now a Liberal parliamentary monarchy. It acted in association with Britain, and the western Liberal powers now stood in opposition to the three eastern despotisms.

The outbreak in Paris was the signal for revolts in Belgium, Poland and Italy. The Belgians revolted against their subjection to Holland, and declared their independence. They had the support of France and Britain, and the Polish rising prevented the eastern Powers from interfering. Belgium set up a limited parliamentary monarchy, modelled on that of Britain, which worked well from the first.

The Polish rebellion was crushed by Russia, and Poland lost the last semblance of liberty. The Italian risings were suppressed by Austria; but the desire for freedom in Italy was strengthened rather than weakened by this defeat, and it was in 1830 that Mazzini began his long and tireless work of conspiracy.

Reaction still had the upper hand in the greater part of Europe; but the cause of political liberty was definitely strengthened in the west. The years from 1830 to 1848 were filled with underground conspiracies, which were to have their effects in 1848.

During these years one event of great importance in the development of liberty took place. Throughout her history Switzerland had never been a unified State. She had been a loose confederacy of independent cantons, some of them democratically governed, others ruled by town oligarchies; but she possessed no effective central government. The Liberal movement, however, was working powerfully in Switzerland, especially in the more progressive cantons. They set up completely democratic cantonal governments, and many of them even adopted the referendum as a means of enabling the individual citizen to exercise direct power.

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

But this alarmed the more conservative cantons. They formed a *Sonderbund*, or separatist league; and the despotic powers, which hated this growth of democracy, gave their support to the *Sonderbund*, and prepared to intervene. A warning of this intention was sent to the Swiss Liberals by the British Government. Acting with prompt vigour, they defeated the *Sonderbund*, brought all the cantons into line with the democratic movement, and set up an effective central Government, before the despots could act. Thus was established the most completely democratic system which the world has yet seen. It had features of interest which will demand our attention in a later chapter.

Then came, in 1848, an amazing and almost simultaneous series of revolutions in almost every country of Europe. In France the middle-class monarchy of 1830 was overthrown by a two-days' rising in Paris, and a convention, to be elected by manhood suffrage, was summoned to draw up a new constitution. In Germany all the States, including Prussia, were forced to adopt Liberal constitutions, mostly with manhood suffrage, and a Parliament was called at Frankfort to make a constitution for united Germany as a whole. In Italy every ruler was compelled to agree to a Liberal constitution. In Austria, and in the provinces of the Austrian Empire — Hungary, Bohemia, Croatia — the same easy victories were won, and the Chancellor Metternich, who had been the standard-bearer of reaction since 1815, was sent flying into exile in London. In Denmark and in Holland the kings were compelled to agree that their Governments should be responsible to elected Parliaments. All over Europe, the system of repression seemed to have collapsed in a moment, almost without bloodshed, as if the trumpets of Jericho had sounded. And most of these new constitutions seemed to be far more democratic than that of Britain, since they generally established manhood suffrage.



## A SERIES OF REVOLUTIONS

But this astounding victory was shortlived. The armies of the despots, taken by surprise, rallied their forces. The rivalries and enmities of different nationalities, especially in the Austrian Empire, facilitated their defeat. The new Parliaments, filled with theorists who had no experience of the problems of government, did not know how to deal with the problems that faced them. By the end of 1849 the revolutionary movements had been crushed in Germany, the Austrian Empire and Italy, and the old regime in these countries seemed to be fully restored. The fate of France was yet worse. Her convention had framed a constitution on the American model, under which there was to be a president directly elected by the whole people, with independent control of the executive. Louis Napoleon, nephew of the great conqueror, offered himself for election, and the magic of his name won success for him. Soon, by a *coup d'état*, he swept aside the popular assembly, and made himself a dictator, modelling his methods upon those of his great uncle. He used the traditional methods of dictatorship, muzzling the Press and imprisoning his critics. As dictators can often do, he gave to France a period of apparent prosperity, and an adventurous foreign policy; but in the end he led her to the disaster of Sedan.

The series of revolutions which filled the first half of the nineteenth century thus seemed to have ended in failure. But they had not wholly failed. They had brought about the establishment of Liberal systems in several of the smaller States: in Belgium, in Switzerland, and now in Denmark and Holland. These were to be lasting; and the smaller countries became models for the rest of Europe of good government and contentment.

Moreover one of the German States, and one of the Italian States, remained loyal to the constitutions they had set up in the excitement of 1848. In Italy the King of Sardinia, in the bitterness of defeat, still adhered to the *statuto* whereby

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

he had established representative and responsible government in his dominions, on the British model. This made Sardinia the hope of Italian patriots; and when the time came, as it was soon to do, for the emancipation of Italy, the *statuto* became the constitution of the united realm. In Germany, the King of Prussia did not cancel the grant of a democratic franchise which he had been constrained to make in 1848. He did not, indeed, allow his Government to pass under the control of the elected Parliament, but remained the head of the executive and of the army; and he made manhood suffrage innocuous by dividing the electors into three classes according to the amount of taxes they paid, thus ensuring that the numerically small classes of the rich and the middle class should outweigh the great majority of the voters. Still, Prussia, hitherto the most despotic of States, now had an elected representative body which had a voice in public affairs; and this caused the eyes of German Liberals to turn towards her with hope, and made her the destined leader of the German nationalist movement.

Thus Liberalism, though not yet Nationalism, had won some real victories in this era of revolution. But the most important result of these upheavals was that they convinced the rulers of Europe, or the more intelligent among them, that mere repression was hopeless, and that it was futile to resist forces so powerful as those that were at work among all the peoples. They learnt that they would be wise to take their peoples into consultation, in reality or in appearance. They learnt also that they could best consolidate their power by putting themselves at the head of the powerful national movements which had stirred so much unrest. After 1850, therefore, a period followed which was marked by two main features. The first was a series of wars which brought about the consolidation of Germany and Italy and the emancipation of the Christian States which had hitherto been subject to the Turks. The second was the adoption, in every

## SOBER PROGRESS IN BRITAIN

European country save Russia and Turkey, of the parliamentary system, and of the liberties of which that system is the main bulwark. The rapidity with which this triumph for liberty was won during the years from 1850 to 1880 was one of the most remarkable features of European history. It had been made possible by the revolutionary struggles which preceded it.

But this was not the only explanation of so astonishing a change. The spectacle of what had meanwhile been happening in Britain had an equally potent influence. For Britain also had had her troubles, in some ways more serious than those of the continental countries. But she had experienced no revolutionary upheavals, though revolution had sometimes seemed to be near. She had surmounted her difficulties, both at home and (as we have already seen) in her empire, by a liberal application of the medicine of liberty. And now she was at the apogee of her power, her wealth and her prestige, beyond rivalry the greatest nation in the world. It is an essential part of our study to explain this contrast.

### §3 SOBER PROGRESS IN BRITAIN

Britain was not unaffected by the successive seismic waves that passed through Europe; but she felt them in a very mild form. When the revolutions of the 'twenties took place on the Continent, she saw a reform meeting dispersed by the military in Manchester. Her equivalent to the revolutions of 1830 was an exciting general election; and in 1848, when all Europe was ablaze, four cabs passed through the streets of London carrying a gigantic Chartist petition to Parliament.

It was not because the British people lacked incentives to revolution that Britain was free from revolutionary upheavals. They were suffering from social ills perhaps greater than

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

those of the continental countries; and although Britain had become the richest country in the world, large sections of her people were suffering intolerable miseries.

The first impact of the industrial revolution had fallen upon her, and it had coincided with the strain of a long-continued war. The ruling class, taken by surprise and engrossed in the war, had made no attempt to deal with the social dislocation which these changes caused. A great part of the working population had been reduced to acute distress. They had to work intolerably long hours, in bad conditions, for bare subsistence wages. They were forbidden to combine for the redress of their grievances. Often as many as a quarter of them could only keep body and soul together by supplementing their wages with Poor Law relief, which put them and their children at the mercy of the Poor Law authorities. In their ugly and sordid towns, no provision was made for their health, and almost none for their education. They were subject to the most savage penal laws. There was a cruel contrast between their misery and the growing wealth of the landlords and capitalists for whom they laboured. All the forces of the law seemed to be arrayed against them, as if they were enemies: the Corn Laws raised the price of their food, and the Game Laws exposed them to savage penalties if they dared to supplement their scanty earnings by poaching.

The power of the State appeared to be wielded exclusively in the interests of a small ascendant class of landowners. This brave and obstinate aristocracy, who had resisted Napoleon without flinching, knew and cared nothing about the problems of the new industrial order, and interpreted every cry of distress as a threat of revolution. Even the organizers of the new industry, who were doubling and redoubling the wealth of Britain, were excluded from any share in the direction of public affairs; the towns they had created were unrepresented in the House of Commons, and

## SOBER PROGRESS IN BRITAIN

the policy of the nation seemed to be conducted without regard to their needs.

From such conditions blind revolution might well have come. Yet it did not come. It did not come partly because religion and humanitarianism were at work to relieve the worst distresses and to ward off mere despair; but partly, also, because even during the blackest years of reaction, in the first seven years after the war, there was no such complete suppression of freedom of speech and of the Press as there was on the Continent. Public opinion was operative, and influenced the actions of Government. Even a reactionary Tory Parliament could be open to reason. Thus when Francis Place and Joseph Hume marshalled the evidence against the prohibition of Trade Unions, and brought actual workmen to testify in a committee-room of the House of Commons, the Parliament of 1824 was so much influenced that it carried the repeal of the Combination Acts. It was the still surviving liberties of Britain, restricted as they were, that kept hope alive, and saved Britain from revolution. Liberty was the prophylactic against violence.

After the war there was, in Britain as on the Continent, a period of mere frightened reaction, a time of paid spies and *agents provocateur*. But it lasted only seven years, and was destroyed by its own absurdity. A period followed in which the more enlightened Tories, while resolute to resist the demand for popular rights, set themselves to prove that the 'glorious constitution' could still redress grievances. They removed the iniquities of the penal code, and created an efficient police force; they reduced the barriers to trade; they removed the disabilities of Dissenters and Catholics. These things they did because free discussion had forced them to realize that reforms were necessary.

But these were no more than palliatives. What prospect could there be so long as power was monopolized by the reigning oligarchy? Their power must be overthrown; but,

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

without revolution, it could only be overthrown if they themselves consented to its overthrow.

Happily there was one section of the ruling class — the Whigs — who had made up their minds that the grossly unrepresentative character of the House of Commons, through which the oligarchy maintained its power, must be amended. They were ready to open the gates of the citadel, and to admit the people to a share in the control of government. They got their chance when the Tory party was split by the emancipation of the Catholics; and in 1830 a Whig government came into office.

Eager reformers had at first little confidence in the Whigs, who were aristocrats as proud and exclusive as their rivals. But the Reform Bill which they promptly proposed, though it was far from introducing democracy, was so bold that it aroused eager enthusiasm. It swept away the 'rotten' and 'pocket' boroughs which had enabled the landowning oligarchy to control Parliament. It gave seats to the unrepresented industrial towns. It conferred the franchise upon all occupiers of houses of the value of £10 a year. And although only a minority of the nation was thus enfranchised, this minority included most of those who had given themselves training in the difficult art of self-government, by managing factories and mines and shops, by organizing churches and schools and hospitals, and by carrying on the numerous local bodies that had grown up to conduct rudimentary systems of drainage, street-paving and lighting in the towns.

There was a fierce fight, lasting two years, before the Reform Bill was carried. But once the battle was lost and won, the privileged aristocracy accepted the result with a good grace, because they had been trained by parliamentary discussion to submit to the decisions of a majority. And because the aristocracy had themselves shared in this peaceful revolution, there was no sudden breach in the traditions of government, no conquest of one class by another, no dictator-

## SOBER PROGRESS IN BRITAIN

ship of the *bourgeoisie* or of the proletariat, no vengeance and no proscriptions. For a generation to come, aristocrats continued to fill the great offices of State; but what they now wielded was leadership, not domination; and as, within their limits, they had a fine tradition of public service, their standards were extended, by the influence of snobbery, to the other classes that now shared power with them. Behind them, driving them on, was an army of reformers, of many schools of thought. No one school was able to dominate, as the victors in a revolution dominate; all made their contributions in the open discussions of Parliament and the Press.

The passing of the Reform Bill opened a very active period of reconstructive work—mostly prepared for by commissions and inquiries, in which theoretic reformers, such as the followers of Bentham, took an active part. Elected municipal councils were set up in the towns; they gave opportunities to public-spirited citizens, and soon began to bring about improvements. The vicious Poor Law system, which had pauperized a large proportion of the population, was sternly revised, and its administration was put into the hands of elected Boards of Guardians. These were but the first of a long series of reforming measures, which cannot here be described.

It is often said that *laissez-faire* was at its height in this period. It would be more true to say that *laissez-faire* began to be abandoned. Both the Factory Act of 1833, and the beginning of Government interferences with education, were definite breaches with *laissez-faire*: the more so as, in both cases, staffs of inspectors were appointed to supervise their work. The reports of these inspectors brought about the long series of factory and mines Acts, and gradually created an educational code. The rudiments of a new bureaucracy, such as any State needs that starts upon the task of social reorganization, were being created.

Important as were the achievements of Parliament and of

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

the municipalities, they formed but a part of the reconstructive work of this period. Freedom released the spontaneous energies of all classes of society. While works of humanitarian charity went on upon an ever-increasing scale, the working-classes were building up organizations of their own. They founded Co-operative Societies and Friendly and Provident Societies. They made full use of the still limited rights allowed to their Trade Unions, to secure better conditions from their employers.

Yet more remarkable was the influence exercised by two great spontaneous agitations of these years, which would have been regarded with alarm, and probably suppressed by force, in any continental country at this time.

One of these was the Anti-Corn Law League, the most highly organized system of public propaganda that had yet been seen anywhere in the world. In seven years, it converted Britain to almost complete freedom of trade. The wholesale removal of trade barriers greatly reduced the cost of living, and therefore improved the condition of the people. It also led to a rapid increase of foreign trade, and turned Britain into the world's chief market, the world's principal banker, and the main carrier of the world's trade.

The second public agitation was the Chartist movement, which was a demand for complete democracy, not merely on theoretical grounds, but as a means to carrying out a far-reaching but ill-defined programme of social reconstruction. The Chartist movement had its own newspapers, one of which (the *Northern Star*) preached violence. But nobody interfered with them. It organized gigantic meetings and processions. It even held what was called a National Convention — an ominous term, which conjured up memories of the first French Revolution. These proceedings would, at that date, have caused panic in any continental country. But nobody dreamt of forbidding them. 'The people have a right to meet,' said Lord John Russell, after



## SOBER PROGRESS IN BRITAIN

the Convention. 'If they had no grievances, common sense would put an end to their meetings. It is not from free discussion that Governments have anything to fear. There was fear when men were driven by force to secret combinations. *There* was the fear, *there* was the danger, and not in free discussion.' In these words Russell expressed the very spirit that had kept Britain free from revolution. The Chartist movement had little practical result. But, as free discussion always does, it served a useful purpose. It ventilated grievances, and called men's attention to ills that still had to be removed.

There were, indeed, still many and great evils in the condition of the British people when, at the close of this period, the Great Exhibition of 1851 displayed to the world their wealth, their inventiveness, and their prosperity. The work of reconstruction had no more than begun; but the foundations had been soundly laid, and the consent of the whole nation had been won. While the continental nations were trusting to repression or to revolution, Britain was extricating herself from troubles which were greater than theirs by a liberal use of the medicine of freedom.

Nor was it only at home that she applied this medicine. As we have seen in the last chapter, she was applying it also in the vast empire which she controlled. She was conferring the fullest rights of self-government upon the colonies whose peoples were ripe for it. She was laying in India the foundations of liberty — political unity, peace, and equal laws. She was substituting, in her dependent possessions, the conception of trusteeship for the conception of ownership. She was to be, not merely a land of freedom herself, but the source of a growing freedom in all the lands which she ruled. Henceforth she was to trust, for the maintenance of her empire, not to the exercise of force, but to the ties of a common liberty — ties which, in Burke's words, are 'light as air, yet strong as links of iron'.

## AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION

When the peoples and rulers of Europe considered the wealth and the world-wide power of Britain, the stability of her system, the contented loyalty of her people, it is not surprising that they should have reached the conclusion that liberty doubles the strength of a nation, and is the secret of wellbeing. The rapid growth of political liberty in Europe during the generation from 1850 to 1880 was not solely due to the leaders of the abortive revolutions of the previous generation. It was at least equally due to the example of Britain.

## CHAPTER XII

# THE APPARENT TRIUMPH OF THE SYSTEM OF LIBERTY, 1850-1880

### § I NATIONALIST WARS AND PARLIAMENTS

WE have now come to the period in which, after many disappointments and vicissitudes, the ideals of the revolutionary era attained, with remarkable rapidity, what looked like a final and almost complete victory. Political liberty was established in every country in Europe except Russia and Turkey; and even Russia and Turkey toyed with Liberal ideas during this period.

This remarkable transformation of European politics was largely, perhaps chiefly, due to a series of major wars, fought in the main on national issues. Both the victors and the vanquished in these wars found it necessary to revise their political systems; and all adopted, more or less completely, the system of parliamentary government. But there is a natural incompatibility between the war-spirit and the spirit of liberty; and some of the new systems were vitiated from the outset by the circumstances in which they had arisen.

For the sake of clarity, it will perhaps be best first to summarize in the briefest outline the series of wars, and the political consequences to which they led. We can then survey the broad results of the period as a whole, and give some consideration to the various types of free, or quasi-free, government which were established during its course.

The first war of the period was the Crimean War (1853-56), fought by Britain and Napoleonic France against Russia to prevent her from dominating Turkey. Its chief political

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

result was to display the inefficiency and corruption of both the Russian and the Turkish despotisms; and it led to a short-lived and ineffectual period of reform in both countries.

The next war was that fought by Napoleon III (1859), against Austria in northern Italy, which gave a new impetus to the Italian nationalist movement. Within a year the whole peninsula, except the Patrimony of St. Peter (round Rome) and the territory of Venetia, which remained under Austrian rule, was brought under a single national government. To this enlarged kingdom the *statuto* or constitution, which the king of Sardinia had granted in 1848, was extended; and Italy became a parliamentary monarchy.

Then came three wars deliberately engineered by Bismarck for the purpose of bringing about the unification of Germany under the leadership of Prussia: the first against Denmark (1864), the second against Austria (1866), the third against France (1870-71). These wars had resounding political effects. They brought about the unification of Germany in the form of a federal empire; and for this empire Bismarck devised a constitution which seemed to be highly democratic, but which left the reality of power in the hands of the Prussian crown: we shall have to analyse this brilliant camouflage later. Austria's second defeat forced her to reorganize her system; and the Dual Monarchy of Austro-Hungary was established, with a separate parliamentary Government in each of its halves. Finally, these wars brought down in ruins the pretentious dictatorship of Napoleon III; and in the bitterness of defeat, France had to construct her Third Republic, no longer with the high hopes and aspirations of 1789 or 1848, but in a mood of sobriety. The Third Republic seemed at first to be insecure, but it has survived terrible ordeals, and has lasted from that day to this.

The last of these wars was the Russo-Turkish war of 1878. It almost destroyed the Turkish power in Europe; and if the

## NATIONALIST WARS AND PARLIAMENTS

European Powers had not intervened, or had intervened in a more intelligent way, it might have fully emancipated the long subjugated Christian peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. As it was, Rumania, Serbia and Bulgaria emerged as wholly or partly independent States, though all with territories short of their true national limits. These States, following the fashion of the moment, set up parliamentary systems; but real political liberty could not immediately be made to work in countries which at first almost lacked educated classes, and which had been subject for centuries to the slipshod tyranny of the Turkish sultans.

In 1850, at the end of the era of revolutions, systems of political liberty, more or less democratic in character, existed only in Britain, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Greece; France was then doomed to be governed by a dictatorship. In 1880, at the close of the wars of nationality, real or sham systems of political liberty had also been established in the great States of France, Italy, Germany and Austro-Hungary, and in the little States of Rumania, Serbia and Bulgaria; while both Spain and Portugal, after many troubles, seemed to have settled down under a more or less unreal parliamentary system. Parliamentary government had become the normal and recognized form of government in all the States of Europe except Russia. It had become the mark of a civilized State — as it already was in the United States, in the greater British colonies, and (at all events in name) in the Latin countries of Central and South America.

There were, however, only a few of these States in which popular control of the Government was a reality. It was a reality in Britain and the British colonies, in the United States, in France, in Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden (with which Norway was united until 1905). In all the other cases, and notably in Germany, the appearance of popular control was little more than a façade

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

behind which other forces exercised the reality of power. The victory of political liberty was not as complete as it seemed.

Nevertheless, the victory was a real one. Popular control of government was everywhere accepted in principle; it had become recognized as one of the essential elements of western civilization, even though some of those who proclaimed their belief in it did so with their tongues in their cheeks. And with this had come certain other elements in a system of liberty which were not less important or valuable — which were, indeed, even more important and valuable, if it were not that, as time was to show, they cannot securely exist apart from popular control.

To begin with, the Rule of Law was now fairly well established in the European States: it had become part of the normal usage of civilized society. This means that no man could be arbitrarily imprisoned, or suffer the loss of his life, liberty or property, otherwise by due sentence of law. The legal systems of all the more progressive States had been made just and efficient.

Next, religious toleration became general in almost all European countries, and came to be regarded as one of the marks of civilization. Almost all men enjoyed freedom of belief and worship; and the Jews were released from the ghettos into which they had for centuries been penned. They identified themselves with the countries in which they had grown up; and began to render great services, especially to Germany, not only in business and finance, but in the arts, in music, in science, and in the learned professions. Western civilization was enriched by the ending of a persecution that had lasted for nearly two thousand years.

Again, almost everywhere (except in times of war or crisis) freedom of speech and freedom of the Press were almost unrestrained, and the ferment of discussion which this made possible stimulated intellectual life. The great

## NATIONALIST WARS AND PARLIAMENTS

writers of every country became the common possessions of Europe. Learning knew no frontiers; the astonishing progress of science which marked this age was the common achievement of all the civilized peoples; and nobody yet dreamed of drawing a distinction between German science and that of other countries. Freedom of association, also — the right of like-minded men to organize themselves for the pursuit of common interests and common ideals — was widely recognized. Trade unions were freed from restrictions, especially in Britain; and a new force had come into the life of the industrial nations.

Yet again, nearly all countries instituted systems of education more or less generous. Many of them were far in advance of the rudimentary system with which Britain was still content. The keys of knowledge were being put into the hands of the mass of the people, in most countries; and this was, in itself, an advance towards democracy of momentous importance.

Finally, there was, until nearly the close of the period, a marked progress in freedom of trade and intercourse between the peoples of different countries. In the 'sixties it seemed as if Cobden's dream was going to come true, and the whole world was going to adopt Free Trade. Germany had profited so greatly by freeing the internal trade of her people through her *Zollverein* or Customs Union that she seemed to be almost ready for the complete abolition of protective tariffs; and France took a long step in this direction by the commercial treaty which she concluded with Britain in 1861. If this movement had made the same progress as the movement towards political liberty one of the chief causes of friction between nations would have been removed, and liberty would have brought peace.

Unhappily the intense and fevered spirit of nationalism which the wars of the period fostered put an end to these hopes. The rival philosophy of protectionism had been

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

propounded by the German Friedrich List, as early as 1846. While he admitted that a general freedom of trade would increase the prosperity of the whole world, List argued that if individual nations were to hold their own in a competitive world, they must protect and foster all the more vital industries, including especially agriculture, so as to make themselves as nearly as possible self-sufficient. Inspired by these ideas the rulers of many countries were learning to regard international trade not as a mutual interchange of benefits, but as a form of war; and nations were beginning to compete for markets as they had earlier competed for territory.

Nevertheless, in spite of the growing protectionism of some of the principal countries, the volume of world trade was increasing rapidly even in this age of wars. The whole world was being knit together into a single economic system by a myriad filaments of trade; and innumerable ships going to and fro upon all the seas of the world were, like shuttles on a vast loom, weaving the fabric of a future world unity.

Thus far we have been considering consequences of the growth of liberty which can be directly attributed to the policy of Governments, influenced by the free currents of opinion. We must not, however, disregard a consequence of the growth of liberty which showed itself not so much in public action as in a changed attitude of men towards their fellow-men. As democracy advanced, men's sense of responsibility for others advanced with it; and there was a growth of human kindness such as, perhaps, no earlier epoch had witnessed. It was only under the despotisms of Russia and Turkey that brutal punishments and wholesale *pogroms* or massacres were now possible. Elsewhere, even in the lands where popular control was as yet unreal, public opinion (which could not be disregarded) would not permit such things. In all countries there was a remarkable growth of institutions, mostly maintained by private charity, for



## NATIONALIST WARS AND PARLIAMENTS

the relief of all kinds of distress. Never had there been such an army of voluntary workers striving to render service to their neighbours. We have earlier quoted the saying of a great scholar that the best criterion of the progress of civilization is the progress of charity, of good-will among men. If this is true, as it surely is, the advance towards a nobler civilization which was made when, and because, liberty was winning its victory in Europe was perhaps the greatest advance that history had yet recorded.

These were the early consequences of the triumph of the system of liberty in Europe, incomplete as it still was. They were likely to be extended, and to be rooted more firmly, only if and in so far as the principle of liberty was made more secure. Democracy was as yet, indeed, in its infancy; and there were but few countries in which the habits of mind necessary for the successful working of democratic society were yet fully established. Among these habits of mind are tolerance, readiness to settle differences by discussion and compromise, disbelief in the permanence of decisions reached by force or by trickery, and immunity from the poison of hatred for other nations, other classes, other modes of thought than one's own. Before liberty can be securely rooted, these habits of mind must become normal among a people; and this does not easily happen among peoples accustomed to the methods of war and violence.

In half of the nominally self-governing communities of Europe in 1880 these habits had not yet taken root, and the control of the peoples over their Governments was unreal. If we would realize how far Europe still was from the full achievement of political liberty, we must survey the inner spirit and the actual working of some typical systems as they were in 1880. This will help us to understand the strains and stresses to which the system of liberty was exposed during the next period.

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

### § 2 TYPICAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

#### (a) *Russia*

We begin with Russia, because it was the supreme example of the survival of unqualified despotism in Europe.

After the failure of the Crimean War, Russia was visited by a brief gleam of Liberalism. The Tsar Alexander II, though he would not consider any element of popular control over the central Government, introduced a system of local self-government, under *Zemstva* or County Councils, to which substantial powers were assigned. By depriving executive officers of the arbitrary powers they had exercised, and setting up a system of organized law-courts, he established the rudiments of the Rule of Law. He also abolished serfdom, though not on very generous terms: serfdom had disappeared from its last European stronghold.

These beginnings were not continued. When the unhappy Poles rebelled in 1863, to demand the rights promised them in 1815 and withdrawn in 1830, their revolt was crushed, and reaction resumed the reins. Russian reformers, whose hopes had been raised and dashed, betook themselves to violence, murder and terrorism: they even murdered the Tsar in 1880. Terrorism was answered by terrorism; the protection of the law was withdrawn from political offenders, who were imprisoned, exiled to Siberia, tortured or slain, after secret and arbitrary trials. This regime continued into the twentieth century. Russia became the supreme example to Europe of the evils of despotism; and her people were trained to use and to expect ruthless violence.

#### (b) *Austro-Hungary*

The difficulties of government in the Austrian Empire had always been due to the multiplicity of its diverse peoples. In the Austrian half of the empire, besides the ruling Germans,

## TYPICAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

there were Czechs, Poles and Slovenes; in the Hungarian half, besides the dominant Magyars, there were Slovaks, Ruthenes, Serbs and Croats. This congeries of peoples had for centuries been held together by despotism. But the Liberal and National movements had awakened their aspirations. These aspirations had caused the revolution of 1848; the conflicts of the various peoples ensured its failure. Thereafter the old despotism was restored; but it could not last.

The defeat of Austria in Italy, in 1859, was followed by attempts to find a new solution. A single Parliament was tried for all the peoples; but the peoples (and especially the Magyars) refused to work it. Another scheme, which was discussed but never carried out, was that the empire should be turned into a federation of a number of different racial States, about ten in number. This would have been the right solution; it would have averted many future ills. But the two ruling races did not like it.

Then, in 1866, came the crushing defeat of Austria by Prussia. A rapid solution had to be found; and in 1867 the two ruling races, Germans and Magyars, agreed to the establishment of a dual monarchy, the Austrian and the Hungarian halves of the empire being endowed with separate Parliaments and responsible ministries, while foreign policy and defence were to be discussed by delegations from the two Parliaments. The spirit of this agreement was expressed by a Hungarian to an Austrian statesman, when he said, 'You manage your barbarians, and we will manage ours': the claims of the other peoples were not to be considered.

Nominally this was a triumph for the system of liberty. But it never worked well. In Austria the conflicts of the divergent peoples made real parliamentary government impossible. The emperor and his advisers got their own way by making bargains with various groups; and the responsibility of ministers was unreal. In Hungary the Magyars,

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

though a small minority of the population, maintained their ascendancy by requiring that every voter should speak Magyar, and by 'managing' the elections. Both governments were a mere parody of popular control.

This system could not satisfy the subject peoples. It prepared the way for the break-up of the Austrian Empire, which came about sixty years later. A real federation of peoples might have preserved its unity, formed a strong barrier against external aggression, and preserved what had been a great free-trade area, to the advantage of its members.

### (c) *Germany*

In the revolution of 1848, the German people, and especially their intellectual leaders, were deeply influenced by both the Liberal and the National movements. They wanted two things: the unification of Germany, and the establishment within it of complete political liberty. They failed in both aims. But after the revolution popularly elected bodies survived in several of the States, and especially in Prussia, by far the greatest among them. The King of Prussia, however, did not yield to his Parliament control of his Government. He retained control over the efficient bureaucracy, which really governed the country. More important, he was still the master of the army.

Liberalism was strong in the Prussian Parliament. It tried, by refusing supplies, to prevent the king from making increases in the army which he thought necessary. The struggle was so hot that the king was on the point of abdicating. But in 1860 a very able and masterful chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, came to his aid. Bismarck defied the Parliament, telling them that the greatness of Prussia was to be built up not by speeches and resolutions, but by blood and iron. Disregarding their theoretical control of taxation, he raised through the obedient bureaucracy the funds necessary to create a powerful army. Then, with this instrument, he

## TYPICAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

ought the three wars which unified Germany, and dazzled the bewildered Liberals with this splendid gift. Not only that, but he created, in the constitution of the united German Empire, a Reichstag, or imperial Parliament, elected by universal suffrage. His methods seemed to have given to Germany all that she had hoped for.

But alongside of the popularly elected Reichstag, and wielding equal powers, he set up a Bundesrat or Federal Council, consisting of delegates appointed by the Governments of the various States. If the Reichstag was troublesome, the emperor (or his chancellor) could always get his way in the Bundesrat through his influence with the lesser princes.

Yet more important, ministers were not made responsible to the Reichstag. They were appointed by the emperor (or his chancellor), and were mainly drawn from the powerful bureaucracy, which owed traditional loyalty to the crown. Most important of all, the emperor was head of the army, as Supreme War Lord — head of the armies of the lesser States as well as of that of Prussia. 'Wherein lies the supreme power?' asked the German publicist Delbrück in a discussion of political science. 'It lies in arms. The question, therefore, by which to determine the real character of a State is always the question, "Whom does the army obey?"' In Britain and other free States the army obeys a Government which is responsible to Parliament. In the German Empire it obeyed the emperor, who was not responsible to the Reichstag.

Thus, with amazing skill, Bismarck had created a system which on the surface appeared democratic, but which did not displace, but rather strengthened, the old power of the monarchy. The real governing factors in Germany continued to be the Junker officer class and the powerful bureaucracy, both of which looked to the emperor as their chief. They still clung to the traditional principles of

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

Prussian policy, the belief in force and not reason, in dictation and not persuasion, as the ultimate controlling factors in national affairs and in international relations. Lively as the debates in the Reichstag often were, it could not exercise any real control over the Government; and it was still true in Germany that the people were the servants of the Government, not the Government the servant of the people.

### (d) *Italy*

Cavour, the great statesman of the Italian *risorgimento*, had a profound admiration of the British system, and strove to reproduce it in the government of united Italy. The constitution of Italy therefore had, as its central feature, a representative Parliament, to which ministers were responsible. But this system never worked well. Why?

The representative system was not extended to local government, which was carried on by prefects with a high degree of independent power who were appointed by the central Government. Consequently the Italian people, who had never had any training in self-government, having for centuries been subject to petty local tyrants, failed to get the training which local self-government might have given them. With their background of purely local interests, they did not find it easy to rise to the conception of national interests. Their attention was still concentrated upon local affairs. And their representatives in Parliament were chiefly concerned to strengthen their position in their own constituencies by getting control over the nomination to the very numerous local offices which were appointed by the central Government.

The consequence was that the Italian Parliament broke into small groups and cliques, striving for patronage, and often corrupt. It was never organized into clearly defined parties standing for definite principles; and this is essential

## TYPICAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

for the efficient working of a parliamentary system. The system therefore never worked well in Italy. Time was needed for the creation among the people of a sense of common responsibility for the common weal, without which self-government cannot work well. Only sixty years elapsed before Mussolini easily and contemptuously swept it aside. Perhaps his dictatorship, and the reaction against it, may create this sense of common responsibility, as the dictatorship of Napoleon III did in France.

### (c) *France*

After her many experiments, France at last found her way, in 1875, to a stable system of democratic government. Born amid the humiliation of defeat, it was not inspired by the enthusiasm or the confidence of 1790 or 1848. It was a makeshift, a compromise. Perhaps that is why it lasted: it did not represent the victory of a single school of thought.

In 1848 France had imitated the American model, and provided for a President independent of the legislature. The result had been so disastrous that in 1875 she preferred to imitate the British model so far as a Republic could imitate a Monarchy. She had a Chamber of Deputies elected by manhood suffrage, a Senate elected by those who had held various local offices, and a president elected by the two Houses sitting together. The president, like the British king, had to act on the advice of his ministers; and the Council of Ministers, like the British Cabinet, was made jointly and severally responsible to the Chamber of Deputies, which had sole control over finance.

There was, however, one vital difference from the British system. The powerful bureaucracy created by Napoleon I and strengthened by Napoleon III was still the steel frame of the French system. There were no independent elected local authorities, even the elected Maires of Communes being subject to the authority of the prefects. In every

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

Department (corresponding with a British county) supreme control rested, and still rests, with a prefect appointed by the central Government, and under him there is an army of minor officials. Questions affecting the conduct of officials in the discharge of their duties are not (as in Britain) dealt with in the ordinary courts, but in special administrative courts. The existence of this *droit administratif*, which puts government agents into a special category, is one of the most marked distinctions between the French and the British system.

The control of this vast bureaucratic machine gives to the central Government a far greater degree of power over the daily life of the people than the central Government in Britain has ever wielded; and this is increased by the practice of passing laws in general terms, and leaving the Ministers to carry them out in detail by the issue of decrees: it is only recently that this practice has grown up in Britain.

This immensity of power makes the Parliament jealous of the Ministers, and lays them open to attack upon many subjects which would in Britain be determined by the local authorities, or by the ordinary courts of law. Almost any question may be raised on what is called an *interpellation*; and, if defeated on an *interpellation*, the Ministry as a whole is expected to resign. To control the Ministers, both Houses of Parliament have set up elaborate series of committees: Ministers are not members of these committees, and the *rapporteurs* of the committees are often serious rivals of the Ministers. Furthermore, the French Parliament has broken up into numerous groups, largely owing to the overwhelming preponderance of the Republican Party; most of these groups do not represent organized parties in the country, but shift and change within the Chamber itself. The result is that no Cabinet can count upon the steady support of a majority; it is always dependent upon shifting combinations of groups. Moreover, a French Ministry, unlike a British



## TYPICAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

Cabinet, cannot dissolve Parliament — only once since 1875 has a Parliament been dissolved before the end of its legal term; members are therefore not deterred from overturning a Government by the fear that a dissolution will follow.

The consequence of all these factors is that French Ministries have been extraordinarily unstable. Their average duration, since 1875, has been less than a year. Yet this has not seemed to matter seriously: the machinery of government has been kept going by the bureaucracy. And it has this advantage, that a much larger proportion of the French than of the British Parliament have enjoyed the experience of office, and know what the responsibilities of government are. In sum, at the cost of frequent ministerial changes, the French Parliament exercises a far closer and more detailed control over Government than is possible for the British Parliament, which is completely dominated by the Cabinet, whenever the Cabinet controls a majority.

The instability of Governments, the incessant intrigues of groups of politicians, and the atmosphere of corruption that overhangs a parliament whose members are constantly seeking for patronage for their relatives and supporters, have led Frenchmen generally to look down upon politicians, and undermined their confidence in democracy, which has not yet brought to them the great boons that its apostles had promised. Nevertheless there has never been any serious likelihood that they would abandon it. Its defects are remediable; its virtues are obvious, for it has given to the French people a freedom such as they had never enjoyed before. As her history dictated, France was destined to be, with Britain and the British Dominions, the United States, and the small States of western Europe, one of the protagonists in the maintenance of the democratic ideal in a world which, though it had accepted this ideal in form, had not yet succeeded in translating it into reality.

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

### (f) *Switzerland*

It was in the lesser States of the west that democracy showed itself at its best; perhaps because they were small, had manageable problems to deal with, and were not seriously affected by the great issues of international relations. We cannot attempt to survey them all; and some of them — notably the Scandinavian countries — did not achieve their best results until the next period. But the achievements of the democratic system in Switzerland were so remarkable that they deserve study.

The most striking feature of the Swiss democracy was that it welded into a single community peoples speaking three of the great European languages, German, French and Italian, yet was never troubled by the nationalist sentiment that has distracted other countries in which similar conditions exist. All the races alike are equally devoted to the maintenance of Swiss freedom, and all are ready, if need be, to fight for it. Switzerland has overcome the greatest source of disunity in Europe. It has done this by means of the most complete and unqualified system of liberty that exists anywhere in the world.

Under the constitution, which was drawn up in 1848 and revised in 1874, the federal Parliament controls questions of common interest, such as foreign policy, defence, tariffs, monetary policy, posts and telegraphs. It is elected by manhood suffrage; and the Ministers of State, seven in number, are not nominated by a party leader, nor need they all belong to one party; they are directly elected by Parliament, to which they are individually, not jointly, responsible: a defeat of one of them does not involve the resignation of the rest.

In each of the twenty-two cantons — twenty-two for a country smaller than Scotland — there are separate legislatures, executives and judiciaries. All enjoy manhood suffrage, equality before the law, freedom of speech and of the

## TYPICAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

Press; and the citizen of any canton enjoys full rights if he transfers himself to one of the others. It is cantonal freedom which has mainly solved the racial problem. In every commune, moreover, whether it be a big town or a small village, there is full local self-government, all the officers being elected, usually in open meeting, by the whole body of citizens.

Finally, both in the federation as a whole and in the cantons, a defined number of citizens may demand that any proposal shall be put to a general vote (Referendum); or they may demand that some proposal in which they are interested shall be considered by the federal or the cantonal legislature (Initiative). This is the nearest approach to *direct* democracy, in which every citizen directly participates, that any State has yet introduced.

This system stimulates, in an extraordinary degree, the sense of common responsibility for the common weal. A highly organized educational system, which affords real equality of opportunity to every citizen, deepens this sense of common interest; and it is deepened still further by the military system. Although the neutrality of Switzerland has been guaranteed by all the Powers since 1815, and has never been infringed, every man is required to undergo military training. This is not a menace to any other country, since it is impossible to imagine Switzerland attacking any of her neighbours. It is regarded as an essential element in democracy, a means of bringing citizens of every type together on equal terms, a continuation of their education for life in a democratic society. Should the liberty which Switzerland cherishes ever be imperilled, her sons will know how to defend it.

There is no country in the world in which democracy has been so fully trusted as in Switzerland; and none in which it has created greater well being, or a more real sense of social equality, or a deeper love of liberty as the greatest of human goods.

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

### (g) *Britain*

Most of the countries which had so rapidly adopted free systems of government went far beyond Britain, their exemplar, in the establishment of democracy. They had adopted manhood suffrage, while Britain, in her cautious way, was still feeling her way towards full democracy. In 1867 she, broadly speaking, enfranchised the class of artisans, and in 1884 the agricultural labourers. There, for a long time, she stopped; and less than two-thirds of the adult male population had voting rights before the end of the war, when not merely manhood suffrage but women's suffrage was established. In the last election before the war little more than 6,000,000 votes were cast; in the election of 1935 22,000,000. Yet nearly all men (not women) could get the vote after 1884, if they took the trouble to do so, for a little trouble was required. It has been argued that voting rights were taken more seriously when they were not automatically enjoyed than they have been since they have been as universally attainable as the very air we breathe.

There may be something in this argument. It is certainly true that public interest in politics was deeper and more widespread in the period with which we are now concerned than it has since been. The speeches of political leaders were printed at length in the newspapers, and eagerly read, as they now seldom are. This was, no doubt, partly due to the dominating personalities of such leaders as Gladstone and Disraeli, whose long duel was followed with entranced interest.

But it was also due to the fact that the British parliamentary system was working extremely well, and still had, what it has since in some degree lost, the full confidence of the nation.

Political parties led a vigorous existence, and this is necessary for the working of an efficient parliamentary system, because it is the Opposition, far more than the supporters of the Government, that performs the most

## THE WORKING OF DEMOCRACY

essential function of Parliament — the constant and un-resting criticism of government. But the parties were not yet elaborately organized; they had not yet begun to impose upon their members the strict discipline which has since become general. Members were elected as Liberals or Conservatives, but this only meant that, in general, they were in favour of or against change. They still retained freedom of action upon particular measures; and debates in the House of Commons could not be disregarded by Governments, and often materially affected decisions.

Majorities were not so sweeping as (under the British electoral system) they have more recently tended to be; the Opposition were not swamped by the numbers of the Government's supporters; and Governments therefore could not wield the almost dictatorial powers which they can exercise when they can command great majorities of pledged supporters. For these reasons, the results of debates were by no means foregone conclusions; and they were therefore followed with keen interest.

If we are to judge merely by the number of citizens entitled to mark crosses on ballot-papers, Britain was still far from being a full democracy. But the spirit of her institutions was steadily becoming more democratic. Parliament, even though it had only two parties, represented fairly well the wide range of opinions in the country, because the parties were elastic and not rigidly disciplined; and it genuinely criticized and controlled the Government. It still, therefore, commanded the full confidence of the people; and the misgivings about the system which later arose had not yet begun to appear.

### § 3 THE WORKING OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy was still in its infancy; and popular control of government was very imperfect in most of the countries

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

which had so rapidly adopted the system during the fifty years before 1880.

Time was required, in most countries, to establish the institutions, and even more the habits of mind, which are necessary for its efficient working. For democracy is a difficult system to work, since it implies the harmonizing of a multitude of wills; despotism or dictatorship is easy to work, since it implies the subordination (willing or unwilling) of all wills to one.

Even from the experience of this first brief period in the victory of the system of liberty, it is possible to draw certain conclusions regarding the conditions necessary for the successful working of a democratic society.

The first of these is the existence of peace — not merely the absence of actual war, but the enjoyment of a sense of security. For war not only necessitates the subordination of all the citizens of a State involved in it — even if it be only for a time — to some sort of central control or dictatorship: war vitiates the whole life and outlook of a people, especially when it is successful. The spirit which it engenders is fundamentally hostile to the spirit of liberty; and we have seen how, in the countries in which political liberty resulted from wars, this liberty was apt to be unreal. A democratic world implies a world at peace, and free from fear.

The second condition is that the people who aspire to make democracy a reality must have had training in the difficult art of self-government, and have learnt to accept the results of discussion. This training can, no doubt, best be acquired in the practice of local self-government, and in this sphere, as we have seen, a greater success was attained in Switzerland than in any other country. Participation in the election, once in three years, of a few men to govern a huge city or a county is no substitute for the direct sharing of responsibility which, at every stage, the Swiss system encourages; and, when peaceful conditions prevail, the

## THE WORKING OF DEMOCRACY

democracies of large countries would be well-advised to consider how far a devolution of responsibility is possible. But training in self-government can be acquired in other ways also: in the common management of all sorts of spontaneous organizations, churches, trade unions, co-operative societies, charitable organizations, clubs and societies, and even in sport, where men learn to play the game in accordance with the rules, and to accept the results in good temper, without desiring to attack their opponents or to smash the pavilion. In these respects the British people have probably excelled most other peoples.

Perhaps because of the high prestige which Britain enjoyed during this period, almost all the free States followed the British model of a Government responsible to Parliament, rather than the American model of an executive severed from, and largely independent of, the legislature. The British system has the great virtues that it makes a change of government easy, avoids the danger of deadlocks, and facilitates the concentration of power in the hands of the Government in times of crisis. It depends for its efficiency upon the existence of organized parties, standing for clearly defined principles. But if a party system is to work well, no one party must be overwhelmingly preponderant; otherwise the Government which it supports may become a sort of dictatorship. There must be a strong opposition, alert to perform the essential function of constant criticism. It must be strong enough to look forward to forming an alternative Government; for this saves its criticism from irresponsibility. It is of vital importance, therefore, that parties should be strong and well organized; they must not break up into shifting groups pursuing private ambitions, as they did in Italy, and to some extent in France.

For this reason it has been urged that there ought not to be more than two parties, and this was almost attained in Britain and America. So long as the two parties are elastic,

## APPARENT TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY

and do not impose a rigid discipline upon their members, a two-party system can work well, as it did in Britain during this period. But when parties become unduly rigid, and exact from their followers a complete acceptance of the programmes defined by their leaders, a two-party system cannot represent the range of opinion in a country. Nor is it necessary that there should be only two parties. This condition has only existed in the English-speaking countries, and not completely even there. Elsewhere, and notably in the countries where the democratic system has been most efficient, there have usually been three parties, and often more. So long as there is an electoral system which renders possible the honest co-operation of parties, and so long as they are true parties, and not merely shifting groups, the system works even better than a rigid two-party system.

But these problems had not yet seriously emerged, though they were beginning to loom ahead. In the meanwhile, the infant system of liberty was to be put to a serious strain in the next period. It survived the strain, but not without grave dislocations.



## CHAPTER XIII

### DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL, 1880-1914

#### §1 INTERNATIONAL UNREST

THE new systems of democratic government which had been so rapidly established in Europe during the generation from 1850 to 1880 needed at least a generation of freedom from strain if they were to establish themselves firmly. They did not get it. The generation from 1880 to 1914 was in many ways the most unrestful, the fullest of new ideas and new ambitions, that Europe had known.

This unrest was to end in the great war of 1914-1918, which was to affect profoundly the fortunes not only of all Europe, but of the whole world. Looking back, we can see that this vast upheaval was being prepared during the whole of the generation that led up to it. Although its issues were as confused as its causes, it was to be, in the end, 'a war to make the world safe for democracy'. This end it was to fail to achieve, mainly because of the conflicting ambitions that had been released during the previous generation. We must strive to understand something of these fermenting ambitions, and of the difficulties which they engendered for the new-born democracies.

The nationalist sentiment had been brought to a high pitch of excitement by the national wars of the preceding period, which seemed to have demonstrated that national ambitions could only be satisfied by way of war. It was by triumphant wars that Germany and Italy had achieved their unity. War had given to the small and backward peoples of the Balkans the beginnings of a freedom which by no means satisfied them; throughout the next generation the Balkan peoples

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

were in a state of constant unrest, which the Concert of Europe in vain strove to keep in check; and there was a haunting fear that trouble in the Balkans might involve all the Great Powers in war — as, in the end, it did.

There was unrest also among the suppressed nationalities of eastern and central Europe — among the Poles, who had never submitted to their partition between Russia, Germany and Austria; among the Finns, who could not endure the cold tyranny of Russia; among the Czechs, the Croats and the Rumanians of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And although these aspirations did not, during this generation, lead to any overt movements of importance, the ferment was growing, and produced its results during the Great War.

Among the Great Powers, France, which had been for centuries the greatest, and the most fervently nationalist, State in Europe, had been hurled from her high place by triumphant Germany. She never mentioned, but she never forgot, her lost provinces; she waited for an opportunity of revenge, and meanwhile sought for some compensation in the building of a great oversea empire.

Italy, which had, after centuries of disunity, rapidly attained by war the status of a Great Power, was haunted by memories of her ancient greatness. She, too, dreamed of empire; but her efforts to create an empire in Africa were unsuccessful; she was a poor and ill-governed country, and did not yet count for very much in the high politics of Europe.

It was in Germany that the fever of nationalism was most dangerous. In the Middle Ages Germany had been the greatest Power in Europe; then, broken into fragments, she had been reduced to impotence, and had been for centuries the prey of her more united neighbours. Now, suddenly, as a result of three ruthless wars, she had become the most powerful State in Europe. With power had come prosperity. Her progress in industry and trade during the last decades of the nineteenth century was remarkable; she seemed to be

## INTERNATIONAL UNREST

overtaking Britain despite her long start. Naturally these triumphs awakened an exultant pride, a belief that the German people were the greatest in the world. Among the ruling elements of this powerful nation was still rooted the conviction that national greatness could only be achieved by force, by 'blood and iron'. The whole manhood of the country was trained for war; and the fear of this formidable Power was so great that the other major States all found it necessary to arm themselves upon the same scale.

Nor was Germany content with her own military might. She formed a close alliance with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and a little later with Italy: the Triple Alliance extended from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, and dominated Europe. Fear of it inevitably led to the formation of a rival alliance between France and Russia. And when Germany, not content with her military supremacy, set forth at the end of the century to build up a great naval power as well, claiming 'the admiralty of the Atlantic', Britain, whose naval supremacy was thus threatened, took alarm, and in 1903 and 1907 patched up her differences with France and Russia. She made no formal alliance with them; but thenceforth the three Powers of the Triple Entente acted together in the troubled diplomacy of the succeeding years.

Europe was in effect divided between two groups of Great Powers armed to the teeth. They called this equipoise 'Balance of Power'; but it was quite different from the traditional Balance of Power which had guided European politics for two centuries. For that had meant that when any single Power, such as the France of Louis XIV, threatened to dominate Europe, the other Powers, great and small, combined to resist it; but this new Balance of Power meant that two rival groups of Great Powers divided Europe between them, and the lesser States counted for nothing. And, as the years passed, a terrible clash between them seemed to become more and more inevitable.

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

The Concert of Europe still worked, and staved off one threat of war after another; but always, in its discussions, the two rival groups found themselves on opposite sides. It was in vain that the Tsar of Russia tried to persuade the nations, at the Hague Conference, to agree to an all-round reduction of the armaments, by which every country was burdened, and prevented from using its resources to improve the conditions of its people. Germany flatly refused to agree to any such proposal, and without general agreement, disarmament was impossible. The twin evils of rival alliances and competition in armaments went on growing, and Europe was a powder-magazine in which the least spark might produce a ruinous explosion. The ultimate cause of the Great War is to be found, not in any particular episode, not even in the soaring ambitions of Germany, but in the state into which Europe had been brought by fevered national ambitions and by the survival of the belief that force, rather than reason, must determine the fate of the world.

This unhealthy condition was intensified by the acute commercial rivalry in which all the nations were engaged. Fevered nationalism was poisoning their economic as well as their political relations. They had come to regard international trade not as a mutual interchange of benefits, but as a form of war. Only Britain, Denmark and Holland believed, and acted upon the belief, that the freest possible interchange of goods, capital and men was the most beneficial course to pursue. All other countries tried to enrich themselves by making themselves as independent as possible of other nations, by pursuing national self-sufficiency, and by raising high tariffs against their neighbours.

They were doing this at a time when inventions, swift transport and the opening up of the whole world were bringing all the peoples of the earth within a single economic system, and were making the abundance which the earth

## INTERNATIONAL UNREST

offers so readily available that it was becoming possible to foresee a time when poverty and drudgery could be banished from the face of the earth. The obstacles to trade which most nations were raising were impeding this consummation.

Yet in spite of these obstacles trade and wealth went on increasing; and the dazzling progress which was being made by Germany and by America — both highly protectionist countries — seemed to suggest that trade-restriction was a sure way to national prosperity. It was not so, of course. The amazing progress of these countries was due, not to their fiscal systems, but to the fact that the natural abilities of their peoples and their great natural resources were being skilfully utilized, and were reaping the rewards which they could not fail to reap; Britain, the great free-trade country, was still the world's great emporium, its chief carrier, its trading and financial centre. But the victory of nationalism in the economic sphere was not only retarding progress, it was intensifying friction and bitterness between nations.

Yet another factor contributed powerfully to the growing unrest. While the continental countries had been striving after national freedom and unity, and after political liberty, they had paid little attention to the non-European world, and, as we have seen in a previous chapter, the British Empire had grown amazingly during that period, and now included the more desirable unoccupied regions of the globe.

When the great States of Europe surveyed the condition of the world, they found themselves out of scale in comparison with the vast Russian Empire in the East, stretching from central Europe to the Pacific, with the United States, extending from ocean to ocean, and with the British Empire, sprawling over every continent and every ocean. These were not mere nation-States, they were world-powers; and to rise to the rank of world-powers became the ambition of the greater European States, France, Germany, and Italy.

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

*Weltmacht oder Niedergang*, world-power or downfall, was the motto for Germany which was defined by the German military writer, Bernhardt, in the years before the Great War. The restless ambition of the Great Powers to achieve world-power ere it was too late was one of the most disturbing factors in the generation before the Great War, and one of its main causes.

Africa and the islands of the Pacific were rapidly partitioned during the two decades between 1880 and 1900. In the last years of the century it seemed likely that China also would be divided out among the European Powers; but this was prevented by the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 and by the Japanese victory over Russia, which brought Japan into the ranks of the Great Powers.

It is notable that this rush to control the unoccupied lands of the world was carried out without war, by bargains made in the European Chancelleries. The Great Powers even succeeded in agreeing on the rules of the game of colonization, in the Congress of Berlin, 1884. They also prescribed that certain territories (the Congo Basin) should be open on equal terms to the traders of all nations; if this provision had been made general, it would have been good for the peace of the world. Except in the case of Belgium, whose King became the head of the Congo Free State (and shamelessly misused his power), none of the lesser States of Europe obtained any share of the plunder. It was the Great Powers alone that profited from this feverish rush for colonies.

France, first in the field, built up a great tropical empire in northern Africa, Madagascar, and Indo-China. Britain, fearing to be excluded from regions in which her trade had been predominant, abandoned her reluctance to assume new responsibilities, and acquired what may be called her Third Empire, greater in resources than the acquisitions of any other Power, since it included Nigeria and other West African lands, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Kenya, Uganda, a

## INTERNATIONAL UNREST

controlling power in Egypt, Malaya, much of Borneo, and the lion's share of the Pacific islands. These immense acquisitions were not resented by the non-colonizing powers, because British practice admitted the traders of all nations on equal terms. But they were jealously regarded by those of the Great Powers which felt that they had got less than their greatness demanded.

Italy — defeated in an attempt to conquer Abyssinia — had to be content with two torrid strips on the coasts of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, to which she later added the largely desert land of Libya, seized from Turkey. Germany acquired four colonies in Africa. She acquired them without any opposition. But they seemed an altogether inadequate empire for so great a State; and in the early years of the twentieth century her ambitions of empire made her a source of trouble in many quarters — mainly in south-eastern Europe, where she had conceived the grandiose project of a supremacy extending from Berlin to Bagdad, and in Morocco, where her ambitions twice came near to precipitating a war with France.

Almost the whole of the old world was now divided out between the Great Powers of Europe, and their interests clashed in every part of the earth. This doubled the danger of war — all the more so because the Powers of the Triple Entente, Britain, France and Russia, controlled the greater part of the non-European world, while the Triple Alliance, which held the dominant position in Europe, had comparatively little territory beyond it. And, now that the whole world was partitioned, it was clear that if Germany was to achieve an extra-European empire consonant with her own ideas of her greatness and her claims, this result could only be acquired by war. The distribution of territory and power in the non-European world was thus conceived of — especially by Germany, but not by Germany alone — solely as a question of power-politics, to be resolved ultimately,

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

like all questions of power-politics, by the use or the threat of force. The idea had certainly not yet been born that the leadership of European civilization over the rest of the world was a heavy responsibility, which ought to be administered in the spirit of trusteeship rather than of mere ownership. And until this spirit had achieved mastery, European leadership must be a curse rather than a blessing to the rest of the world.

Democracy, if it is to work well, demands not merely peace in the sense of absence of war, it demands an atmosphere of peace, and of confidence between nations. It is scarcely possible to imagine — short of a condition of actual war — circumstances more unfavourable to the development of the democratic system than those which we have described: Europe divided between rival groups of Great Powers, armed to the teeth and watching one another jealously; the beneficent and peaceful activities of trade and industry distorted by bitter national rivalries; and the armed Great Powers eagerly striving, in keen rivalry, to create great world-empires, and finding their interests so intertwined, and their mutual jealousies so exacerbated in every part of the world, that an outbreak of trouble anywhere might easily bring about a universal conflagration.

## § 2 SCIENCE AND THE SECOND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The deepening unrest of the generation before the war of 1914-18 coincided, most unhappily, with changes in the methods of industry which were of such importance that they deserve to be described as the Second Industrial Revolution.

There were two marked differences between the first industrial revolution and the second. The first was mainly due to the 'rule-of-thumb' inventions of ingenious but generally



## SCIENCE AND REVOLUTION

unlearned men. The second was mainly due to the patient investigations of men of science disinterestedly pursuing knowledge in their laboratories. The first gave a remarkable industrial leadership to Britain. The second gave the initiative in the new industries to those countries — notably Germany and America — that had most assiduously cultivated science, which Britain strangely neglected, until she began to repair her deficiency by founding a number of modern universities in the early years of the twentieth century.

The advance of modern science had been continuous since its beginnings in the Renaissance (p. 85). But its most distinguished achievements, such as those of Newton, had been mostly in the abstract realms of mathematics and astronomy, which appealed primarily to 'intellectuals', and seemed to have little bearing upon the ordinary life of men. It was not until the nineteenth century, and especially its second half, that science began, in Bacon's phrase, 'to come home to men's business and bosoms'.

The application of scientific knowledge and of scientific method to industry had begun in the first half of the century. But in the generation before the Great War, it made such rapid progress that none could fail to realize its significance. Disinterested investigation of the forces of Nature swiftly transformed the methods of many old industries, and created new ones. It gave to Man a rapidly increasing command over the resources and powers of Nature; and placed in his hands illimitable potentialities both of good and of evil.

It is not possible here to survey the astonishing achievements that resulted from the wedding of science with industry. Only a few outstanding examples can be mentioned. In this generation the work of Pasteur and others disclosed the importance of bacterial life not only for medical science (which it revolutionized) but for industry. In this generation the immense potentialities of electric power were disclosed

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

and developed. This generation saw the rapid rise of the chemical industries. It saw the invention of the internal combustion engine, which made possible both motor transport and the conquest of the air. It discovered radio-activity, and the vast possibilities of wireless communication, which brought the whole world within hearing of a single voice. These few examples are merely illustrations of the profound revolution which industry, inspired by science, was bringing about in the conditions of human life.

This revolution, indeed, demanded a reconstruction of the international and of the social order; but the unrest of the time made such a reconstruction very difficult. Distance was almost annihilated, and every part of the world was brought into contact with every other part, by motor transport, by the aeroplane, by the telegraph and the telephone, and above all by the miracle of wireless communication. The world was advancing towards a sort of unity; but fevered nationalism still kept the peoples apart. New materials, hitherto little known or used, such as rubber, mineral oils, asbestos and nickel, rapidly became indispensable for the new industries. But they were very unequally distributed over the face of the earth. It was therefore becoming necessary that the resources of the whole world should be made available for all its peoples; but the eagerness of powerful nations to achieve self-sufficiency, and their readiness to exploit every material advantage they possessed to get the better of other nations, stood in the way. Man had now acquired, and was progressively acquiring, such a mastery over Nature that he could hope, if his affairs were wisely guided, to banish poverty and drudgery; but if this end was to be attained, fair distribution was necessary, and the rivalries and jealousies of the nations forbade.

These were some of the boons which science, wedded to industry, was making available for Man, if he had the wisdom, which he as yet lacked, to use them well. But

## SCIENCE AND REVOLUTION

science was also offering to man the means of destruction as well as of creation. The mastery of the air could be a means of bringing the peoples together; but it could also be a source of terror and ruin. Chemical discoveries could immeasurably enrich all the peoples of the earth; but they could also create explosives and gases of terribly destructive power. Science was making war so hideous and so costly that it threatened the ruin of civilization. Yet, because of the state into which Europe had drifted, the nations were impoverishing themselves in order to heap up these instruments of destruction, whose potency was soon to be displayed in the war of 1914-18.

Meanwhile the Second Industrial Revolution, like the first, was creating new social problems of great difficulty. In all the most progressive countries many industries were tending to pass under the control of great combinations, which wielded a dangerous degree of almost irresponsible power. 'Capitalism' (which means the control of production by the owners of the capital invested in it) was changing its character rapidly. The investors in these giant concerns were so numerous that they could not in fact exercise their theoretical powers of control. The ownership of capital was being much more widely distributed — that was one of the good features of the change; but ownership was being divorced from responsibility. The reality of power was coming to be vested in small groups of directors, chosen, in effect, by co-option. The gap between the mass of workers and the controllers of their working life seemed to be widening; and between 'capital' and 'labour' the new and vital element of scientific technicians was being interposed.

There were merits as well as dangers in the new methods of organizing industry; but neither the merits nor the dangers were being intelligently analysed or understood. Some means of regulating, in the interests of the community, the use of these new and formidable powers, some means of bringing about a fair distribution of their products, some means of

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

securing justice in the relations between the various factors of production, seemed to be needed if liberty for all was to be made a reality in the new conditions.

These were vital issues, affecting the future both of civilization and of liberty. But the world was so much engrossed in the rivalries and ambitions — economic as well as political — of the leading nations that these problems did not receive the attention they deserved, except from a few doctrinaire theorists.

In truth, the moral and political capacity of civilized men was not yet strong enough to control wisely the vast new powers which they had so rapidly acquired; and, tempted by the lust for power, the leaders of some of the nations were more ready to rejoice in the tremendous power of ruining their rivals that seemed to lie in their hands, than to consider how the wonderful advances of their time could best be employed for the benefit of mankind.

### § 3 SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS

Now that democracy had been established, the peoples who lived under it were everywhere beginning to hope for a larger measure of social justice than they had yet enjoyed. For, apart from the difficult problems which have been indicated in the last section, there were many and grave evils in the conditions of even the most democratic countries which made real liberty unattainable for a great many of their citizens. There were flagrant inequalities of wealth, which seemed to grow worse rather than better. Ugly slums in the industrial towns stunted the lives of those who had to live in them, and the industrial world was haunted by an insecurity of livelihood, which exposed the workers to unemployment when 'slumps' succeeded 'booms'. Until these evils were overcome, it could not

## SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS

be claimed that democracy was successful, or liberty real. Political democracy would have to be followed by social democracy; and this was a natural and healthy aspiration, an inevitable outcome of the democratic ideal.

These aspirations led to a revival of the old doctrine of Socialism, which had fallen into the background since the 'thirties; and Socialist parties came into being in every country. The theory of Socialism is that the State ought to take over all productive and distributive enterprises, brushing aside individual enterprise; and that it should use the gigantic power thus acquired to bring about social justice. This theory implies a profound and touching faith in the wisdom and competence of Governments, and a disregard of the fact that individual initiative has been throughout history the source of all progress.

The most unflinching exposition of this theory was that of Karl Marx, a German Jewish exile, who taught that human history is the record of a struggle of classes, and that, just as the feudal order had been displaced by the capitalist bourgeoisie, so this class must in its turn be dethroned by the wage-earning proletariat. But so vast a change could not be brought about peaceably. There must be a revolutionary upheaval to dispossess the bourgeoisie, after which there must be a period of 'proletarian dictatorship'. Once full equality had by these means been established, the Marxists expected that the State would somehow 'wither away'.

This extreme form of the Socialist doctrine, which foreshadowed a bleak prospect of violence and slaughter, was most widely adopted in the countries where the people had least power and least freedom of discussion, and where men put their trust in force rather than in reason. It had many adherents in Russia, where all criticism of the ruling powers was pitilessly suppressed, and in Germany, where, although the Social Democratic Party had many representatives in the Reichstag, they knew that they had no control over

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

national policy. Bismarck, striving to win the allegiance of the working class from the Socialists, carried through a remarkable programme of social reform; but because it was imposed by authority, and did not arise from free discussion, it failed to wean the workers from social democracy of the Marxist pattern, which went on growing in strength until the outbreak of the War of 1914.

But in the countries in which political democracy was a reality, and national policy was determined by discussion, Socialism took on an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary form. Nor was it only or even mainly from the Socialists that the movement towards social reorganization emanated. Those who repudiated the Socialist doctrine of State control, and believed that individual enterprise had always been, and must always be, the driving-force of progress, had for the most part abandoned the old theory of *laissez-faire*, and were ready to use the powers of the State to redress injustices, and to drain the morass of poverty, whose existence had almost everywhere aroused a sense of shame and an eagerness for reform.

In Britain, for example, the Liberal philosopher, Thomas Hill Green, preached that it was the duty of the State to create the positive conditions which would make liberty a reality for all its citizens. It was this idea of the way in which the powers of the State should be used which led a British Liberal statesman, Sir William Harcourt, to declare that 'We are all Socialists now'. He did not mean that the doctrine of State ownership was universally accepted; he meant that everybody was now ready to see the powers of the State boldly used to improve the conditions of life of the mass of its citizens. That view was now widely accepted; and no clearer proof of the reality of this acceptance could be given than the strenuous activities of the British State in social reform, especially between 1906 and the outbreak of war, when, among many other reforming measures, the beneficent

## SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS

system of social insurance became an essential part of civic life.

The democratic countries were thus ready for a real advance towards social democracy. But this advance was very seriously impeded by the world-conditions which we have described. The crushing burden of armaments wasted resources that might have been used for social amelioration. The restrictions upon international trade — modest as they were in comparison with what came later — impoverished all the countries which adopted a restrictive policy. Men's minds were concentrated upon the rivalries of nations and the fear of war, rather than upon the possibility of building up a happier and healthier society. And the secrecy that had to be observed by Governments when international relations were strained sowed suspicions, and fostered the belief that these alarms were mere bogies, invented to distract men's attention from the demands for social advance. In such conditions democracy could not fulfil itself.

But the alarms of the time affected mainly the Great Powers of Europe. There were other States, happy in their comparative unimportance, which were free from the burden of armaments and the rivalries of Great Powers. These countries could, and did, make real social progress even in these distressful years.

The British self-governing colonies (soon to be known as Dominions) were far from the unrest of Europe, and felt that they were safe under the protection of the British Navy. Free from the impediments of old traditions and of rooted social distinctions, they made — especially in Australia and New Zealand — bold social experiments in land-settlement and in industrial arbitration which attracted the attention of the world.

Not less interesting were the developments that were made in the small States of western and northern Europe, which set an example to the world in the working of democracy.

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

They were able to do this because they did not share in the burden of armaments, had no part in the jealousies and fears of the Great Powers, and no ambitions of extra-European empire. Threatening nobody, they thought they were safe under the protection of the Great Powers, and had no need to fear them; and in this period their confidence was justified.

There is no need to review the progress of democracy in all these small States. Some of them, indeed — notably Sweden — did not make this their main contribution until a later date. But one of them, Denmark, achieved during this period results of such interest and value that they deserve examination.

### § 4 THE DANISH DEMOCRACY

Denmark had been a 'constitutional monarchy' since 1848. But this did not mean that the Government was effectively under the control of the representative body. The Rigsdag or Parliament was divided into two houses, one directly and the other indirectly elected. In the former the Liberals always had large majorities, in the latter the Conservatives. The two houses were held to be of equal authority; and for nearly two generations Conservative Ministries carried on the Government with the support of the Crown and the Second Chamber, against a Liberal majority in the First Chamber. But the Liberals, though excluded from office, were able to achieve a good deal through their control over finance. They established free trade. They created a system of social insurance long before Britain embarked upon this enterprise. And legislation was adopted to assist small farmers to become owners instead of tenants of their land.

The peasants of Denmark had long since escaped from serfdom. They were a very independent body of men, and



## THE DANISH DEMOCRACY

their independence was intensified when they became owners of their land. The widespread ownership of small farms was, indeed, the foundation of Danish democracy; and it was mainly by the spontaneous action of this freedom-loving class, rather than by parliamentary action, that the admirable social democracy of Denmark was built up during the years from 1880 to 1900. To-day there are more than 200,000 farmers in Denmark, and 94 per cent of them own their own land. Only one-sixth of the land is held in farms of more than 150 acres; two-thirds of it is held in family-farms of between 25 and 150 acres, and the remainder in still smaller holdings: more than half of the farms are of less than 25 acres.

Denmark is naturally a poor country, with a poor and sandy soil and no mineral resources. She had been hard-hit by the war of 1864, which had torn from her the fertile provinces of Schleswig and Holstein. She was still harder hit when the crops of the American plains began to pour into the country in the 'seventies, for wheat-growing had been her chief industry. Other countries also were affected by this influx. France and Germany strove to meet it by imposing high tariffs on imported foodstuffs, that is to say, by denying to their peoples the plenty which the world was offering. But the self-reliant democracy of Denmark chose a better way. They used the cheap and abundant food-stuffs of the New World as the raw material for a more highly developed system of animal husbandry, which produced butter, cheese, bacon and other products that found rich markets in other countries — especially in Britain, which had not attempted to adjust herself to the new conditions. They made the free admission of foreign products (which at first they had feared) the foundation of a new prosperity, such as they had never known before. This small and barren country actually developed a great and prosperous export trade in agricultural products.

To succeed in this aim, they had to combine forces and

## DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

co-operate. The first co-operative dairy in the world was started in Denmark in 1880. Soon there were thousands of co-operative societies, of many different types — for the co-operative buying of the farmer's requirements, for the co-operative selling of his produce, for co-operative processing of a high standard in dairies and bacon-factories. Every farmer was a member of a number of these societies, and played his part in controlling them: there could not have been a better training for democracy. The whole system was free and self-governing. And it brought a remarkable prosperity to rural Denmark. There were no big landlords drawing tribute in the form of rent. There were no very rich men, and none very poor. Here was almost an ideal democratic society, brought into being not primarily by State action, but by the spontaneous activity of independent and self-reliant men.

Such results could not have been obtained without a real educational inspiration. Denmark had enjoyed universal elementary education since 1814 — nearly two generations earlier than England. But the inspiration came from another source, though an educated people was necessary to profit from it. A great man, an unorthodox divine who was also a scholar and a poet, Nicholas Grundtvig (1783-1872) saw that a free people needed to be educated for life, and not merely for livelihood. Between 1860 and 1880 there came into existence, under his guidance, a large number of what are called Folk High Schools, to which came, under no compulsion, young men and maidens of between 18 and 25, who lived together and studied together, the men in the winter, the girls in the summer. These schools were not maintained by the State; they were self-supporting. They did not give technical training; by a generous treatment of history and poetry, they strove to send their pupils back to their work with a high sense of public obligation, and a noble view of what life ought to be. Many thousands of young Danes

## THE DANISH DEMOCRACY

passed through these schools at their own or their parents' expense. It is the testimony of those who have studied the Danish system of co-operation that its success was due, and its continuance is still due, mainly to the inspiration brought into it by these disciples of Grundtvig. A free, self-reliant and independent people had been inspired by a high sense of what social life could be; and they produced the appropriate results.

Nor was it only, though it was most markedly, in agriculture that the national renaissance of Denmark was visible. This little nation of three million people and scanty natural resources developed a number of small-scale industries which maintained one-third of the population, and a shipping trade out of all proportion to its numbers. It produced good literature, good art, good architecture; in freedom, and without any hot-house forcing by the State, it created an admirable democratic civilization.

In short, it demonstrated to the world how fine a thing the life of a democratic society might be, when it was freed from the compulsions, the burdens and the terrors of militarism. It is dreadful to think that a thing so fine and so full of promise has been trampled in the mire by the iron feet of brutal conquerors.

## CHAPTER XIV

# THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL, 1914-1939

### § I THE WAR AND THE NEW WORLD-ORDER

THE Great War of 1914-1918 was the outcome — almost the inevitable outcome — of the conditions described in the last chapter. It might have been avoided if Germany and Austria (which thought the moment favourable to them) had shown greater restraint. But so long as Europe was divided between two rival alliances armed to the teeth; so long as Germany continued to be dominated by the militarist tradition of Prussia; and so long as Austria and Hungary continued to believe that their very existence depended upon keeping in subjection their dependent peoples and their kinsfolk beyond the frontiers, war must always have been imminent, and the peace which democracy needed could not have been attained. Perhaps it was necessary that there should be an explosion to clear the air.

This was a war unlike any other in history, because, in a very short time, all the peoples of the earth were directly or indirectly involved: it was the first event in history in which all the races of mankind were concerned, and knew that they were concerned. It was the First World War.

At the outset, indeed, it seemed as if this was only the latest of the long series of wars of ambition that had filled the history of Europe — a conflict between the competitors for *Weltmacht*, between the rival alliances whose mounting armaments had kept Europe in constant dread. But it soon became apparent that the issues were far deeper than this. When Austria set out to destroy Serbia, and when Germany,

## THE WAR AND NEW WORLD-ORDER

pledged to defend the neutrality of Belgium, set her obligations at nought as 'a mere scrap of paper', and over-ran that little country, it was evident that the freedom of small countries was very insecure, and that the sanctity of treaties, which is the very foundation of international morality, could not be relied upon. The methods of warfare which Germany in particular adopted — the bombardment of unfortified towns, the sinking of merchant vessels by submarines without warning and without provision for their passengers and crews, the frequent disregard of the Red Cross, the raining of death from the skies upon civilian populations — were not only defiances of the accepted rules of civilized warfare, they implied a contempt for the humanity whose growth had been one of the greatest achievements of civilization.

Although Germany won victory after victory, the tide of world opinion turned steadily against her. One country after another declared against her; and before the war ended practically every country in the world, except the trembling neutrals of Europe, was at war with her.

The turning point came when, in 1917, the United States abandoned her deep-rooted tradition of non-interference in European affairs, and threw her whole strength into the conflict on the side of the Allies. This not only made the defeat of the Central Powers inevitable, it revived and deepened the idealism with which the Allies had entered the struggle, but which had been staled by the dragging misery of the trenches. President Wilson made himself the mouthpiece of the hopes of a new world-order in which war should be banished and justice should reign throughout the world. These hopes alone seemed to afford some compensation for the long horror of the war. The world was to be made 'safe for democracy'.

As the downfall of the Central Powers drew nearer, the suppressed peoples of eastern and south-eastern Europe began to hope and to work for their freedom. The break-up

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was accelerated by vigorous action among the Czechs, the Southern Slavs, and the Rumanians of Transylvania. In the vast territories which Germany had forced Russia to cede to her in 1917 — none of them German by race — the little peoples of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania looked forward to a freedom they had never yet enjoyed; while Poland hoped for the undoing of the iniquitous partitions of the eighteenth century, at the expense not only of Russia, but of Austria and Germany. The cause of national freedom was at last about to win its triumph in that part of Europe where it had been least successful. All these emancipated peoples were ready to press their claims when the Peace Conference met.

When the war ended, it seemed possible to create a new and happier world. Four militarist and despotic, or quasi-despotic, empires had fallen in ruins: the Russian, the Turkish, the Austrian and the German. The field was clear for the final triumph of democracy, and for the freeing of all subject nations. And the three Great Powers in whose hands lay the tremendous responsibility and the dazzling opportunity of shaping the new world were the three great democracies from which the democratic idea had spread over the world — Britain, France and the United States. Surely now the world would be made 'safe for democracy'.

The work of settlement had to be done hurriedly, for hunger and disease were following in the footsteps of war, and chaos might easily come. Moreover, ruined Russia had set on foot a revolution which promised a millennium for the disinherited, and which offered allurements to the despairing. And, in four years of savage warfare, men had learnt to trust to violence under despotic leadership for the attainment of their ends. Haste was needed. There was no time for careful thought.

Surrounded by a clamour of conflicting voices, and haunted by the rancours which a bitter war could not but create, the

## THE WAR AND NEW WORLD-ORDER

three masters of the new world did their best. In some respects their work was wise and hopeful; but they made some bad mistakes.

The territorial rearrangement which they carried out was, in the main, simply a recognition of accomplished facts; for the suppressed peoples of eastern Europe were enforcing their own claims. If some territory was taken from Germany, it was territory to which she had no rightful claim. In some cases a plebiscite of the local population was taken. In adjusting boundaries, the peace-makers honestly tried to follow a principle, the principle of nationality; the greed of the victors had less part in this than in any earlier post-war settlement. It was not easy to define frontiers with justice in a region where races are so inextricably mixed as they are in eastern and south-eastern Europe, and some injustices were committed, notably in the definition of the boundaries of Hungary. But, on the whole, this was the first treaty-settlement after a war which was determined, not by the ambitions of the victors, but by principle.

So great was the enthusiasm for democracy at the end of the war that all the new States, and all the defeated States, adopted completely democratic constitutions, with manhood suffrage and proportional representation. Even the older democracies more fully democratized their systems: Britain, for example, now adopted universal suffrage. But the sudden introduction of complete democracy in countries entirely untrained in the art of self-government, and in many cases with illiterate populations, could not at once work well. In some of the new States democracy became a cover for powerful organized interests.

The most remarkable of the new democratic systems was that of Germany. The imperial dynasty, and the ruling houses of the various German States, were overthrown; the Liberal spirit which had been so powerful in Germany before the time of Bismarck seemed to have revived; a Liberal

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

constitution was adopted at Weimar; and the German people were ready to take their place in a fellowship of free democracies. As Germany, owing to the numbers and qualities of her people and her geographical position, is and must always be the pivotal State of Europe, it was a matter of supreme importance that her democratic system should be encouraged and helped by the other nations, who ought to have welcomed her as a partner, and recognized that she could not fairly be held responsible for the errors and crimes of the Government which she had discarded.

The organizers of the new order could thus feel that the whole of Europe, west of Russia, now consisted of a number of free nations, all, without exception, democratically governed. They provided this new Europe with a common organization, the League of Nations, which realized the dreams of many prophets, from Sully and St. Pierre to Rousseau and Kant.

The League was to be a council of the nations, all of which, great and small alike, were to be represented in its annual Assembly, while a Council, including the Great Powers and representatives of the lesser Powers, was to act as the executive of the larger body. The League was designed to provide peaceful methods of settling all disputes; its members were pledged to join forces in order to compel recalcitrants to accept its decisions; it was to bring about a general disarmament of the nations; it was to protect the rights of minorities in countries of mixed races, under the terms of minority treaties which had been imposed upon these countries; through a special Labour Organization it was to persuade all the nations to advance in step towards an improvement of labour conditions; and, outside Europe, it was to administer a system of Mandates, under which the colonial territories taken from Germany and Turkey were to be governed in such a way as to give equal access to the traders of all nations, and to ensure that the native populations were justly treated.



## BLUNDERS OF THE PEACE-MAKERS

The Covenant of the League of Nations was the expression of a great ideal. It was designed to give to Europe what she had lacked since the fifteenth century — a single moral authority for western civilization. It was to put an end to war. It was to substitute justice and reason for force, and discussion for dictation, in the relations between States. In short, it was to carry the democratic ideal into effect in the international as well as in the national sphere.

These were the outlines of a new world-order; and it was possible to hope that the new system would gradually take root, and be accepted by all peoples. It seemed that the evil conditions which had produced the war had been got rid of. The division of Europe between rival alliances of Great Powers had been replaced by a league of all powers, great and small, for the preservation of peace. The spirit of militarism seemed to have been exorcized in Germany. The suppression of minor nationalities by Austro-Hungary had been ended by the emancipation of the nationalities.

Unhappily this fair prospect was vitiated by grave errors for which the peace-makers must accept responsibility. If we are to understand why the Great War had to be fought again, we must examine these errors; and, in particular, realize why it was that the great experiment of the League of Nations was destined to fail.

### § 2 BLUNDERS OF THE PEACE-MAKERS

The first, and perhaps the greatest, of the peace-makers' blunders was that, instead of inviting the co-operation of all peoples, including both enemy States and neutrals, in the shaping of the new order, which was of equal concern to them all, the victors allowed no discussion, but dictated the terms of peace. It was not only the conditions under which arms were to be laid down that were dictated. In this case,

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

dictation was inevitable. But the victor-Powers also conceived it to be their right and duty to dictate all the conditions of the new world-order; and these, since they affected enemies and neutrals as well as the victors, ought to have been submitted to a conference of all peoples.

The Covenant of the League of Nations itself was included among these dictated terms, though the defeated States were at first excluded from membership. The League thus came to be regarded as something imposed by force, as a device for preserving the supremacy of the victors. And, instead of recognizing that the German people could not be held responsible for the faults of a Government which it had discarded, the peace-makers compelled the representatives of Germany to accept a statement whereby they admitted their exclusive responsibility for the war.

The second blunder of the peace-makers was that they inflicted vindictive and intolerable penalties upon Germany. A century earlier, the authors of the Vienna settlement had had the good sense to realize that France was an essential element in the European system, and had made it easy for her to take her place among the Great Powers. The peace-makers of 1919 treated Germany as an outlaw. They imposed upon her crushing indemnities, which would, if paid, impoverish her people for an indefinite period. They forfeited not only her navy but her mercantile marine. They occupied, for a long period, some of the richest parts of her territory, and made her pay the costs of the occupation. They forced her to disarm almost completely, while all her neighbours continued to be fully armed; and although they promised that general disarmament should follow, no practical steps for this purpose were taken for thirteen years. All these, and other humiliating conditions, had to be accepted by the new German democracy, which became responsible for them in the eyes of its subjects. The inevitable consequence was that the struggling German democracy, which it

## BLUNDERS OF THE PEACE-MAKERS

was so important to establish, was discredited and weakened; and the more virile among the Germans were convinced that, by any means possible, they must escape from this intolerable servitude. This was perhaps the main reason for Germany's subsequent repudiation of the New Order.

The third major blunder of the peace-makers was their failure to recognize the consequences of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. What had been a Great Power was split up among five small Powers, each with its own military system: the total number of men under arms was greater than before the war. The empire, moreover, had been an economic unit, with internal free trade, and the prosperity of its parts had depended upon this. Now this economic unit was broken into five parts, all with high tariff barriers which cut across the established lines of trade; and the two capitals, Vienna and Budapest, which had been economic as well as political centres, were left like heads cut off from the bodies that maintained them. The peace-makers might reasonably have stipulated, when recognizing the independence of the new States, that there should be a limitation of their armaments, and that they should have a common fiscal system. This might have persuaded them to adopt some sort of federal organization, which would have brought them, as a group, to the level of a Great Power. As separate units, they were incapable of defending themselves against any powerful neighbour, such as Germany or Russia, and their individual weakness offered a dangerous temptation to aggressors; as a federated group they would have been too strong to be attacked, and this would have been a safeguard for peace.

These were the main defects of the post-war settlement. They could have been amended later, if the three great democracies had acted together. It was, indeed, their duty, not merely to frame terms of peace, but to watch the development of the New Order, and help it to take root and flourish.

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

This duty was all the more incumbent upon them because they were the richest nations in the world, and the great creditor-countries; as creditor-countries they could wield a powerful influence upon all the debtor countries. They also controlled the major part of the world's material resources.

Unhappily their co-operation came to an end soon after the war. America withdrew into her traditional isolation. She refused to ratify the peace treaties which her President had taken a main part in framing. She repudiated the League of Nations, of which he had been the principal author. She declined to join with Britain in a guarantee of French security, which might have conjured away France's haunting fear of a German revival. As her armies had come late into the field, and played only a minor part in the actual fighting, America's chief contribution had been the supply of munitions and other materials to the Allies. For these she expected to be paid; and this necessity made it impossible for the European Allies to relieve Germany of the intolerable burden of reparations. America was convinced that the maintenance of the democratic system in Europe (and consequently in the world) was no concern of hers.

France — especially after the withdrawal of the United States — was hag-ridden by fear of a German revival, having seen her country invaded by German armies three times within a century. In the critical years after the war, she looked at all questions from this angle. She thought of the League of Nations as a means of preserving the peace-settlement intact. She made alliances with Germany's neighbours for the purpose of preventing her revival. She insisted upon her pound of flesh in the matter of reparations, and, when they fell short, occupied the Ruhr country as a means of enforcing them, with the consequence that the German monetary system was brought into chaos, and the German middle class, the most stable element in the country, was ruined. There was an improvement after 1925, and Ger-

## BLUNDERS OF THE PEACE-MAKERS

many was admitted to the League of Nations. But the belief of the German people in the possibility of getting justice from the New Order was sadly weakened.

Finally, Britain, to whom the world now looked for leadership, was half-hearted about the New Order, and her ruling elements never really believed in the League of Nations, regarding it as little better than Utopianism. After the war, the Government was dominated by Conservative forces; and Conservatism, though an essential element in a sound political system, looks backward rather than forward, is timid about big new ideas, and is not the best guide in a period of great and rapid change.

For all these reasons, the New Order did not answer to the hopes that had risen so high at the end of the war. Democracy was working badly in most of the new States. All the States were pursuing the policy of economic self-sufficiency which forbade the return of prosperity; and although there was a revival between 1924 and 1929, it was insecure, because it depended largely upon enormous loans from America, which was enjoying a period of factitious prosperity. In Italy there was a revolt against the democratic system as early as 1922; in Germany discontent was growing, especially after the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923; and although the German people were still loyal to the democratic system — as they showed by the swiftness and ease with which a reactionary movement organized by Adolf Hitler was suppressed in 1923 — the instability and ineffectiveness of successive Governments were weakening confidence.

The main hope of appeasement lay in the work of the League of Nations, which was steadily becoming the centre of international discussion, and was creating an international spirit. It helped Austria and Hungary to restore their financial stability; but this could only be a temporary alleviation, because the root of their difficulties lay in the dislocation of the established lines of trade in the Danubian lands.

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

It settled some minor troubles that might have led to war; but it was still doubtful whether it was capable of dealing with any major trouble in which Great Powers were involved. Its Labour Office succeeded in getting many draft conventions for the improvement of social conditions adopted, but not in ensuring that they should be put into effect by all the nations. It helped in bringing about an interchange of population between Turkey and Greece, but not in making the Minority Treaties effective in the restless States of south-eastern Europe. It grappled successfully with various social evils, such as the White Slave Traffic and the Drug Traffic. But it did not attempt to tackle the major difficulties, such as boundary disputes; and Article XIX of the Covenant, which was designed for such purposes, remained a dead letter. Above all, though there was a great deal of discussion, it failed to deal with the all-important problem of disarmament; after a dozen years, Germany was still left disarmed and defenceless amid neighbours armed to the teeth.

In short, although the influence of the League went on growing during the first ten years after its foundation, it had not succeeded, and did not seem likely to succeed, in turning the New Order into a reality. And when, in the years following 1929, Europe was faced simultaneously with a vast financial and economic crisis which threatened to disorganize its economic life, and with a formidable reaction against the whole democratic system, culminating in the Nazi revolution in Germany in 1933, the League proved to be a broken reed.

### § 3 CAUSES OF THE FAILURE OF THE NEW ORDER

The breakdown of the League was the sign and proof that the New World Order established at the end of the war had

## CAUSES OF FAILURE OF NEW ORDER

been ill-designed. Its failure condemned Europe to another terrible ordeal.

Why did the New Order of 1919-20 break down? It may be that the system of the League could have been successful if the leading Powers which founded it — America, Britain and France — had been loyal to it, and had wholeheartedly laboured to use it for the twofold purpose for which it was established — the maintenance of peace, and the removal of the grievances from which wars might arise. They did not do so, and the blame for failure must lie largely at their doors.

But there were certain inherent defects in the League system which could not but militate against its success. An examination of these defects ought to shed some illumination upon the great problems of western civilization, and may perhaps help us to build a better structure upon sounder foundations.

To begin with, the League was a League of sovereign States, and it was definitely stated that it would not interfere with the sovereignty of its members. But the purposes for which the League existed could not be fulfilled unless there was some limitation of the irresponsible sovereignty of its members. Because its members were sovereign States, nothing of importance could be done except by a unanimous vote; and unanimity is almost impossible to attain. Ever since the sixteenth century the claim of nations to unlimited sovereignty, which implies that they must be judges in their own cause, had been a fruitful cause of wars; and unless the nations, especially the more powerful nations, were willing to abandon the right to make war when they willed, there could be no hope of settled peace. In theory the nations accepted a limitation of their sovereignty when, under the Covenant of the League, they pledged themselves not to go to war until methods of peaceful settlement had been exhausted. In practice the fact that they were all recognized

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

to be sovereign States made it difficult to take firm action to ensure that this promise was observed.

In the second place, the League was universal in its range. Almost every State in the world was included in its membership, and the same obligations rested equally upon them all. But a system which imposed, in regard perhaps to some European dispute, precisely the same obligations upon Siam, Liberia and Guatemala as upon Britain, France and Germany was essentially unworkable. Even in Europe the disparity between the great States and the small was too marked. The smaller States were the most enthusiastic upholders of the League, because it promised to give them security, and also because among them democratic sentiment was most genuine. Yet if the policy of the League should involve action against a Great Power such as Germany, they could not be expected to participate, for their very existence might be endangered. The responsibility of carrying League policy into effect must necessarily fall upon the greater Powers, if military action should be necessary. The theory of 'collective security', upon which the League was constructed, was, in truth, only practicable on the assumption that if all States were united in the resolve to prevent acts of aggression, no acts of aggression would take place. But this assumption was proved to be unsound when first Japan, then Italy, and finally Germany defied the principles of the League, and the League proved to be impotent to check their aggression. 'Collective security', in practice, could only work among a group of Powers more or less equal in strength; and it was because the recalcitrant Powers knew that common action by all States would in the last resort be impracticable that they went on their own way with impunity.

It was not only in Europe, but in the colonial territories, that the New Order failed to achieve satisfactory results. The Mandate system, which provided that, under the supervision of the League, the trade of all nations should be



## CAUSES OF FAILURE OF NEW ORDER

admitted to colonial territories and the native populations should be protected against exploitation, represented a new spirit in the administration of dependencies.

But it was applied only to the territories taken from Germany and Turkey. It was never even suggested that these sound and generous rules should be applied to the colonies of other countries; yet if the principles were sound in themselves, there was no reason why they should not be generally applied.

Moreover, practically all the confiscated German and Turkish lands were taken by the British Empire and France, which already possessed vast colonial empires. This looked like, and was, pure power politics; and the nations which had no colonies not unnaturally felt that the chief victor-Powers were creating a colonial monopoly for themselves. Even Italy, one of the leading Allies, got no share of the plunder, save the torrid strip of Jubaland, ceded to her by Britain.

It is not surprising that a distinction began to be drawn between the 'have' and the 'have-not' Powers. The economic value of tropical colonies was, no doubt, grossly exaggerated; but colonial products, especially rubber, vegetable oils, cocoa and certain minerals, were beginning to be important and even essential materials for the industrial countries. And when, at the Ottawa Conference in 1932, Britain and her Dominions, departing from the policy of open markets hitherto pursued in these regions, showed a desire to reserve them for their own advantage, the resentment of the non-colonial powers increased. The New Order and the League had certainly failed to secure equal justice in the colonial sphere.

The weaknesses of the League system were not perceived by its supporters in the victor-countries when it was initiated, or during the first ten years after the war, when it seemed to be taking root. Indeed, there are many who refuse to

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

recognize them even now. But they were recognized and exaggerated in other countries, notably in Germany.

Growing disillusionment about the efficacy of the New Order was suddenly intensified when, in 1929 and the following years, the whole world was afflicted by the most serious economic dislocation which it had ever endured. The trouble began with a stock-exchange collapse in America, which put an end to the American lending that had produced the factitious prosperity of 1924-29. But its real cause was the disorganization which had afflicted Europe since the war — the monstrous burdens of international obligations, and the frenzy of economic nationalism by which no country was unaffected. Instead of recognizing that economic wellbeing, like peace, could not be secured by any country for itself alone, all countries had been striving to enrich themselves by restricting their trade with their neighbours. Exclusive and self-regarding national sovereignty was showing itself to be even more destructive in the economic than in the political sphere.

Fearing economic chaos, all the nations intensified their efforts after an unattainable self-sufficiency in an interdependent world. They heightened their tariffs; they invented new methods of restricting trade — quotas, exchange restrictions, and prohibitions — paying no regard to the advice of all the experts, who assured them (in the World Economic Conference of 1933) that unless trade barriers were reduced, the world's economic system would break down, the standards of living would be reduced, and blind revolution might follow. The results of these methods were that, by 1933, the total volume of world-trade had sunk to one-third of its dimensions in 1929, and something like 25,000,000 workers were unemployed in the industrial countries.

In face of such deep and widespread distress, it was not easy to retain faith in the New Order. Faith in it was yet further undermined when, in 1931, Japan carried out, with

## TOTALITARIANISM V. DEMOCRACY

impunity, a monstrous aggression at the expense of her neighbour China, and conducted her attack with such ruthless inhumanity that the whole world was horrified. The League sent out a commission of inquiry, and condemned Japan's action, but did nothing more. 'The sky will soon be black with chickens coming home to roost,' said a Chinese representative at Geneva. Never was prophecy more cruelly verified. It had been demonstrated that the League could be defied with impunity; and the lesson went home in certain countries which had lost faith not only in the New Order of 1919, but in the whole democratic idea. The field was clear for a revival, in more horrible forms, of all the evil forces against which the civilized world had been struggling, and seemed to have struggled successfully. Out of the wreck of the New Order arose the horrid spectre of totalitarian despotism.

### § 4 TOTALITARIANISM VERSUS DEMOCRACY

Already, before the collapse of the League of Nations and before the economic blizzard struck Europe, an ominous repudiation of the democratic ideal had taken place in two great countries, Russia and Italy.

The revolution of 1917 had enthroned in Russia what was called a dictatorship of the proletariat, and had proclaimed the beginning of a world revolution. But the proletariat never had any share of power, which was wielded by a knot of ruthless fanatics, who set themselves to destroy, by wholesale slaughter, all the elements that might have impeded the execution of their plans.

Their instrument was a highly organized and disciplined party, whose members alone were eligible for any positions of authority; other parties were forbidden to exist. The new

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

masters of the Russian people asserted a control over every aspect of the life of the nation far more absolute than the Tsars had ever wielded. The bodies, the minds, the property of their subjects were absolutely under their control: theirs was in the fullest sense a 'totalitarian' system. Those who claimed rights of property, such as the *kulaks*, or land-owning peasants, were pitilessly 'liquidated'. Those who dared to express criticism of the regime were imprisoned, tortured, condemned to the slavery of labour corps, or slain, as often as not without even a semblance of a trial. A reign of terror kept the people submissive; it was carried out by a huge secret police, known as the Cheka, and later as the Ogpu.

The Soviet tyranny scorned democracy, and denounced it as an instrument of western capitalism. Freedom of speech, freedom of the Press, freedom of worship, were suppressed: the subjects must know only what their masters thought it fit for them to know, and they were prevented from knowing anything about what went on in the rest of the world, except through the distorting mirror of the controlled Press and radio. They were consoled in their miseries by imaginary pictures of the greater miseries of the peoples of the democratic countries. Having never in their history known the savour of freedom, the Russian people were easily persuaded to believe that they were the pioneers of a happier order, not for themselves alone, but for all the world; and that the cruelties they had to witness were the necessary preliminaries to the coming millennium.

In all its main features, the Russian system was the model for the later 'totalitarian' States which arose in Europe. The exercise of power by a despot through a single disciplined party, and the proscription of all other parties; the use of terrorism as an instrument of government; the denial of the reign of Law; the suppression of freedom of speech and of the Press; the exaltation of brutality as a proof of manliness, and

## TOTALITARIANISM V. DEMOCRACY

the trampling under foot of all human pity; the bringing of all the resources of a great country under the absolute control of a despotic Government; the skilful use of lying propaganda as a means of keeping the people ignorant and content; the training of youth in a spirit of intolerance and mercilessness so that they might become means of enchaining the people — all these methods, first wrought out in Russia, were to be the methods, more or less perfectly utilized, of the other countries which fell under the curse of 'totalitarian' rule. But there was this difference, that (at first, at any rate) the object of the Russian system was not merely the extension of the power of its masters, but was the realization of an ideal for humanity — a crude and meanly material ideal, but still an ideal.

At first Russia hoped to extend her revolution to other countries, and maintained knots of Bolsheviks everywhere. This aroused alarm in every country, and it gave to the other totalitarian powers, Italy and Germany, the chance to proclaim that they were the defenders of civilization against Bolshevism — a claim which found a hearing in some quarters even in the democratic countries. But the European peoples failed to recognize the loveliness and nobility of the Bolshevik creed, which had very few admirers.

After the death of Lenin, the first Bolshevik dictator, in 1924, his successor, Stalin, changed his policy. He abandoned the aim of universal revolution, and devoted himself to an attempt to turn Russia into an industrial country. This led to the creation of an immense and arbitrary bureaucracy, often corrupt and inefficient, between whom and the mass of the people a contrast in wealth and power soon arose as acute as that between capitalists and workers in the western countries.

The change in policy also brought about a fierce struggle with those who remained loyal to the older doctrine, which Stalin solved by putting to death most of the original

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

revolutionaries; later he carried out a terrible purge of the officers of the army, to make his own position secure.

He now began to angle for the friendship of the western democracies; he proclaimed himself a pacifist; he made non-aggression agreements with the smaller States on his western borders, Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, and showed every sign of keeping them; he made alliances, aimed against Germany, with France and Czechoslovakia; he joined the League of Nations, and became the strongest advocate of disarmament; he even published a democratic constitution for Russia, though it did not impair his own autocracy.

A despot is always reluctant to see his own power weakened. Stalin had no sympathy with democracy, and these steps were wholly due to his fear of an attack by Nazi Germany, which was loudly proclaiming its utter aversion from Bolshevism. Hitler even asserted that any agreement between Germany and Russia would spell Germany's downfall.

But when, in 1939, Germany found herself involved in the danger of a war on two fronts, as a result of her attack on Poland, Stalin saw the chance of making a less incongruous friendship with the kindred totalitarian State, and dropped the mask of democracy. The result was the iniquitous agreement with Germany of August 1939, concluded while Britain and France were negotiating for Russian aid to Poland. This enabled him to seize half of unhappy Poland, in defiance of his pledges, to reduce the little Baltic States to subjection, and to perpetrate a cold-blooded attack upon unoffending Finland. These events showed that, despite all pretences, Russia under Stalin was as faithless, as unscrupulous, and as cynically aggressive as Germany herself. It demonstrated that totalitarian despotism is, by its very nature, always a danger to the peace of the world.

We have dwelt at some length upon the Russian despotism because it shows that the real danger to the ideals of

## TOTALITARIANISM V. DEMOCRACY

democracy, and to the peace of the world, lies not in the particular philosophies which these despotisms uphold, but in the very fact of despotism itself; in the utter subjugation of the peoples which they rule; in the insatiable thirst for power which masters their tyrants; in their cruelty; in their faithlessness. The world will not be 'safe for democracy' until these hideous growths have either been destroyed, or rendered impotent by a powerful and trustworthy combination of all the peoples that love liberty and hate tyranny.

Italy was the second victim of totalitarianism; and this was the more significant because she had enjoyed nominally democratic institutions for more than sixty years when, in 1922, the democratic system collapsed with ignominious ease before the attack of Mussolini and his Fascist braves. Democracy cannot stand unless it is rooted in the support of the people; and, as we have seen (p. 224), the parliamentary system had never worked well in Italy. After the war, the feuds of political cliques had been at their worst, and the politicians seemed to be incapable of dealing with the problems that faced them. There was acute economic distress; the nation had been suffering from an 'inferiority complex' ever since the disaster of Caporetto; sections of the working class were infected with Bolshevik ideas, and had been seizing factories, and trying to work them for their own profit. The wealthier classes, full of alarm, were ready to give their support to anyone who seemed likely to preserve order. In these circumstances it was easy for the ex-socialist, Mussolini, to seize the reins of government; and the powers of a modern Government are so vast, and (if ruthlessly used) so irresistible, that, if they fall into the hands of a tyrant with some popular backing, it is almost impossible to displace him. That is why it is so important that this mighty power should not be allowed to fall into the wrong hands, a danger against which an efficient democratic system is the only effective safeguard.

Mussolini was an able and masterful man. He did not,

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

like the Bolsheviks, promise a materialist millennium to the mass of the people. Rather he appealed to the people to remember their great past, to unite their forces, to restore the ancient greatness of their country, and to regain the Mediterranean Empire which ought to be their heritage. It was an appeal which was capable of inspiring ardent youth; and there is no doubt that Mussolini was able to restore pride and confidence among the Italian people, and to bring their system to a high pitch of efficiency.

But he did this at a very great price, the sacrifice of liberty. Although he repudiated and denounced the social aims of the Bolsheviks, he imitated their methods. Like them, he poured scorn upon democracy and all its works. He reduced the representative system to a mere farce. He suppressed all parties but his own Fascists, and encouraged the black-shirted bravoës of that sect in the use of lawless ways of suppressing all opposition. Freedom of speech and of the Press came to an end; a reign of terror, espionage and delation made it dangerous even to whisper criticism of the Government, and critics were silenced by arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and exile. The whole nation was trained and armed for war, and the pacific ideals of democracy were scouted as signs of decadence.

The spirit which Mussolini set himself to create was a danger to the peace of the world. This was shown in his attack on Corfu (1923), and still more in his iniquitous conquest of Abyssinia (1935-36), which provided the occasion for the first and only attempt of the League of Nations to put its principles into effect. Fifty nations joined in imposing economic sanctions against Italy; but they were a failure because Britain and France, afraid of alienating Mussolini, would not press the attack home. The League was defeated and finally discredited. This was the first great victory of military despotism over the New Order, which it reduced to derision. Finally, in conjunction with Germany, with whom



## TOTALITARIANISM V. DEMOCRACY

she had made friends, Italy threw her weight into the attack against the struggling democracy of Spain, and helped to establish, in that country also, a totalitarian dictatorship which menaced the access of the western powers to the Mediterranean.

Evidently the new totalitarian dictatorships were a menace not only to the peace of Europe, but to the establishment, and even to the survival, of democratic ideals; and the great democratic States, hating war and not yet awakened to the peril, did nothing to avert the menace, which could easily have been checked by a quiet firmness. But Italy, despite Mussolini's loud words, was too weak a State to offer serious danger; and Russia, withdrawn into aloofness behind her forests and marshes, and moving (as many thought) towards democracy, had ceased to be a cause of alarm. The real danger came from Germany, where, in 1933, Hitler and his Nazis had established their power, and were building up the most brutal, cruel and faithless tyranny that the world has ever seen.

No revolution can succeed by the use of force alone. It must have the inspiration of some kind of ideal, capable of firing the imagination of a people, and especially of its youth. Hitler — a supreme demagogue, endowed with a hypnotic gift — was inspired by a belief in the superiority of the German race over all others, and in its divine destiny to rule the world. Before he came to power he told the German people, disheartened by defeat and suffering, that they were invincible, that their armies had not been defeated in the war, but had been stabbed in the back by traitors, Jews, Liberals, Communists and Pacifists. They were ready to listen to this doctrine, which had been drilled into them by a long line of teachers, from Fichte and Hegel down to Treitschke and the renegade Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain. He told them that they were being rotted by the sentimentalism of democracy and pacifism, that they must discard defeatism,

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

trust to their own might, and prepare themselves under discipline for the mastery of the world. The democracies (so far as they paid any attention to this as yet discredited demagogue) laughed at his monstrous megalomania. But the disillusioned youth of Germany drank it in as a gospel.

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that the Nazi creed had conquered the mind of Germany before Hitler came to power, and that his rise was due to a united movement of the German people. Although Hitler was a demagogue of genius, although the German people were plunged in distress and humiliation, although the magnates of German trade, fearing democracy, supplied him with the means to raise armies of braves, and although successive democratic Governments showed criminal weakness in dealing with him, Hitler was only able to obtain little more than a third of the votes cast in an election in the autumn of 1932. He came to power as the result of a party intrigue organized by the German Conservatives, who hoped to use him as a tool. But, having once seized the reins of government, he showed once again, as Mussolini had already shown, the terrific powers of the Government of a modern State, if they are unflinchingly employed.

For the realization of his terrible ideal, two things were necessary; first the utter subjugation of the German people, and their organization as a conquering force; and, secondly, the conquest, one after another, of the neighbouring States, until Germany should be so powerful as to be irresistible.

The first of these ends was attained by an imitation and an intensification of the methods already used in Russia and Italy. Every element of opposition was destroyed, including all who might conceivably form the nucleus of an alternative system. When some of Hitler's oldest friends and supporters showed signs of independence, they were murdered in cold blood by his orders, along with hundreds of others (June 1934). Critics of the new regime were, often without even

## TOTALITARIANISM V. DEMOCRACY

the semblance of a trial, thrown into concentration camps, where they were humiliated and tortured with inconceivable cruelty. The Jews, in particular, who had rendered immense services to German civilization, and among whom were many of the country's most distinguished artists, scholars, thinkers, teachers and doctors, were singled out to be held up to public hatred and contempt, as a source of defilement for the pure German blood, and as the traitors who had ruined the country. Even in their long, tragic history of persecution, the Jews have never suffered as they have suffered in 'civilized' Germany. They could offer no resistance; but non-resistance is no safeguard against evil. Happy were the few who could escape into penniless exile.

The immediate instruments of this unspeakable tyranny were thousands of young men, enlisted in the special corps of the S.S. and the S.A. German young manhood was being trained to rejoice in cruelty, and to regard brutality as a sign of manliness. At the head of this terrible engine of oppression was a selected group of very able and very wicked men, without a moral sense, without faith, without honour, without bowels of compassion. They did their dreadful work with great efficiency. An immense force of secret police, directed by the unspeakable Himmler, kept in being a reign of terror which numbed the whole people, by means of espionage and delation, so that no man dared to speak his mind. The reign of terror has often been used as an instrument of government, but never with such cold-blooded and scientific ferocity as in Nazi Germany.

It was not only the bodies, but the minds and the very souls of the German people that Hitler and his gang strove to subjugate; and the dreadful fact is that in a very large degree they were successful. The Churches, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, had to endure relentless persecution, because they exalted the service of God above the service of the soulless State. The trade unions were brought into sub-

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

jection, and dared not resent the steady reduction of the workers' standards of living to meet the cost of colossal armaments. The whole educational system, from the elementary schools to the universities, was used as a means of indoctrinating youth with the ideals of Hitler, and of making him almost an object of worship. The whole young manhood of the people was brought under iron discipline either in the Army or in Labour Corps, and taught to believe that the supreme object of life was the service of the State and of its Führer; and the ablest among them were picked out for training to carry on the Hitler methods.

The most powerful instrument of spiritual subjugation was Propaganda, under the diabolically skilful direction of Göbbels. The whole of the German Press, and of the wireless, were brought under the direction of his Ministry of Propaganda. Every paper, every broadcast, continually drummed into the minds of the people what their masters wanted them to believe; they heard the truth, or parts of it, when that served the purpose; otherwise, lies. And, lest they should be disturbed by facts or opinions from other sources, the most severe penalties — even death — were inflicted by the ever-present police upon those found guilty of reading foreign newspapers, or listening to foreign broadcasts. This system seems to have been remarkably successful. At the beginning of the Hitler regime there were many elements of criticism and opposition. They have almost disappeared. Germans have almost ceased to have minds of their own; they are an orchestra which answers only to the baton of the conductor. Germany has become a vast prison, a prison not only of the bodies, but of the minds and the souls, of a nation that once was great, and is still materially powerful.

Such are the results of totalitarian government. Such is the system which is offered to the world as an alternative to the system of liberty, slowly and imperfectly built up during the long centuries surveyed in this book. Hitler's worst crime

## TOTALITARIANISM V. DEMOCRACY

is that he has poisoned the very soul of the German people, or at all events of its youth; for a generation to come it will be impossible for other peoples to trust them, because they have learnt to venerate lies and to rejoice in cruelty.

But the utter subjugation of the German people was only a means to Hitler's supreme end, the subjugation of the world, and, in the first instance, of Europe. For that end all the resources of the German people were for six years devoted to a gigantic effort of military preparation, and especially to the construction of an immense air force, which is the most potent instrument of terrorism.

Hitler, however, believed that he could achieve his ends, or a large part of them, without the waste of war. He had worked out a technique whereby he hoped to win the fruits of victory without paying the price.

In the first place he calculated that the great democracies, the dictators of the settlement of 1919, who had so recently been the dominant powers in Europe, were now so timidly fearful of being involved in war that they would accept accomplished facts if he presented them, and go on accepting them until they had lost all credit, and could be easily overcome. His calculation was justified by the event for a long time — a short time in years, but they were vital years, and seemed very long to those who realized what was happening. The democratic powers went on accepting accomplished facts, in the Rhineland, in Austria, in Spain; they went on hoping that Hitler's insatiable ambition would soon be satisfied, and striving to 'appease' him, as if they were dealing with the normal and justifiable ambitions of a Great Power. They even eased his path, by forcing Czechoslovakia to surrender to him her magnificent defensive frontier, and to leave herself defenceless, trusting to his pledge to respect her freedom, which was as fragile as all the promises he had earlier made. It was only when *this* pledge also was broken, and when he had designated Poland as his next victim, that

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

Britain and France plucked up their courage and resolved to put a stop to his aggressions. They could have done so far more easily at earlier stages. Every time they yielded, Hitler's strength had increased, and his power over his own people had increased also. If the democracies have now a hard battle to wage, it is because they did not recognize the danger in time, and take effective steps to deal with it.

In the second place, Hitler realized that the little States which were his destined victims were individually too weak to resist him, and too jealous of their precious 'sovereignty' to combine for their defence. They offered a positive temptation to an aggressor so completely devoid of scruples as he. And, having lost the illusory protection of the League of Nations, they were all trusting to a trembling neutrality, which he would never hesitate to break when it suited his immediate purpose.

In dealing with these intended victims, Hitler had a regular method from which he never departed, and which yielded him easy victories. First he gave the most solemn pledges not to attack them, in order to lull them and their possible helpers into a sense of security: the making and the breaking of pledges was the very foundation of his art. He did this with Austria, with Czechoslovakia, with the reduced Czech territory after the surrender of Munich, and with Poland. In every case the pledge was broken, and was meant to be broken. Next he organized groups of men to raise trouble in the doomed country — there are groups of Germans in all the countries neighbouring Germany, and they were reinforced by trained agitators from Germany itself. Then he let loose, in the controlled German Press, torrents of abuse against the doomed country and its rulers, and flagrant lies about the alleged oppression of Germans. Finally he poured into the doomed country masses of troops to which resistance was impossible, followed by great bodies of secret police to organize a reign of terror. Then he announced the accom-

## TOTALITARIANISM V. DEMOCRACY

plished fact, and the western democracies tamely accepted it. By these methods he achieved bloodless victories — bloodless for Germany, though not for the victims of his tyranny — in Austria, in Czechoslovakia, in Memelland. Only the Poles, encouraged by the promise of aid from France and Britain, dared to resist. They were swiftly overwhelmed; and Hitler evidently anticipated that once more the western democracies would accept the accomplished fact, especially as Russia had deserted them.

But the western democracies had at length awakened to a realization of the gravity of the crisis. With the New Order of 1919 in ruins, they resolved, at the eleventh hour, to fight for the survival of liberty in Europe. But they were left to fight alone, save that the British Dominions threw themselves into the struggle. The little nations of Europe clung to their trembling neutrality, which could give them no security against a man of dishonour. America stood aloof, convinced that the wars of Europe were no concern of hers, not even when they were fought to secure the survival of democracy and all it stands for.

Thus began what may well be called the Battle of Armageddon: a fight against the embattled and triumphant forces of evil for the survival in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and perhaps in the world as a whole, of all that makes civilization worth having, of all the moral and spiritual advance which humanity has made during the long centuries surveyed in this book.

In the second chapter, we traced the roots of western civilization to the Greek passion for intellectual liberty and fearless pursuit of truth, to the Roman belief in the sovereignty of Law, and to the Christian teaching of the equal value of all human souls in the sight of God. In later chapters we have tried to follow the gradual ripening of the fruits that grew from these roots. These fruits have been freedom of thought and of conscience, the rule of equal laws, the faith

## THE GREAT WAR AND ITS SEQUEL

of treaties, the growth of tolerance and of human kindliness, the subordination of Governments to the needs of the people they govern, and a growing recognition of the rights of the humble and poor, and of the simple and backward peoples, to a full share of the boons of civilized life.

All these fruits of civilization the Nazi philosophy repudiates with scorn. Nay, it goes further: it repudiates the seminal ideas which we have inherited from Greece, from Rome, from Christianity — the very foundations of our civilization. To that philosophy, truth, honour, justice and compassion are meaningless terms. If this foul and evil spirit should be victorious, it would carry us back into the jungle, where no right is known but that of might; it would plunge us into the darkness of that totalitarian control of men's bodies, minds and spirits which, in primitive ages, forbade through uncountable centuries the advance of mankind out of animalism.

The war against this evil thing is indeed a Holy War, in which any man might be proud to give his life. For life is not (as some Pacifists seem to think) the most precious of possessions: justice, honour and truth are more precious. This is, in truth, so far as its issues have been defined, the noblest and the most idealistic war that has ever been fought. It is a war between the forces of evil, and the imperfect but upward-striving forces of good. It is like the struggle between Christian and Apollyon in the *Pilgrim's Progress* — Christian burdened by a sense of his own shortcomings, but with his face turned towards the light; Apollyon, the very embodiment of evil, rejoicing in his own wickedness, and using every device of cunning and treachery to wear down his foe.

Proud is the privilege that has fallen to Britain and France, a privilege they have earned by the part which they have played in the upbuilding of liberty: proud is the privilege, whatever it may cost, of bearing the brunt of the fight



## TOTALITARIANISM V. DEMOCRACY

against triumphant evil in order that good may continue its upward struggle on the earth.

May we be able to act worthily of our high calling, however heavy the strain may be. May God grant, not only that the right may win, but that in striving for its victory and in using its results we may be saved from the very evils against which we are struggling — from selfish ambition, from cruelty, from injustice, even to those who have been led astray and whose minds have been poisoned. May the outcome of this struggle be the cleansing of civilization and its final penetration by the Spirit of Liberty.



# INDEX

- ABELARD, 48  
 Absolute monarchy, 76, 103  
 Abyssinia, 274  
 Act of Settlement, 134  
 Africa, 119, 139, 240  
 Air, conquest of the, 244-5  
 Albigensian Crusade, 47  
 D'Alembert, 154, 156  
 Alexander the Great, 29, 31  
 America, North, British colonies in, 138,  
   secured for liberty, 140, expansion of,  
   176-80, industrial progress, 239 (*See also*  
   UNITED STATES)  
 American constitution, 163-4  
 American revolution, 161-5  
 Anabaptism, 89  
 Anti-Corn Law League, 210  
 Aquinas, St Thomas, 48, 49, 101  
*Areopagitica*, 116  
 Aristotle, 24, 26, 29, 81, 102  
 Armada, the Great, 99, 119  
 Association, freedom of, 217  
 Athens, 23, 26, 27, 30  
 Augsburg, Peace of, 90  
 Austin, John, 103  
 Australia, 183-4, 249  
 Austrian Empire, 202, 214  
 Austro-Hungarian Empire, 220  
  
**BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY, 74**  
 Balance of Power, 237  
 Baltic States, the, 272  
 Banking, rise of, 79  
 Bank of England, 130  
 Basel, Council of, 74  
 Bastille, Fall of, 167  
 Basutoland, 185  
 Beccaria, penal reformer, 159  
 Belgium, 197, 198, 201, 255  
 Benevolent Despots, 160  
 Bentham, Jeremy, 158  
 Berlin, Congress of, 240  
 Bernhardt, General, 240  
 Bismarck, Otto, v, 214, 222, 248  
 Black Death, the, 44  
 Blanc, Louis, 199  
 Bodin, Jean, jurist, 102, 107  
 Boers, the, 184-6  
 Bohemia, 74, 109  
 Bolsheviks, the, 271  
 Britain, 132, 140, 143, 175, 196, 198, 200,  
   205, 206, 207, 230, 231, 257, 263 (*See also*  
   ENGLAND)  
 British Empire, the, 181-94, 240, 267  
 Bulgaria, 215  
 Bureaucracy, 55, 209, 222, 225  
 Burke, Edmund, 155, 158  
 Bynkershoek, jurist, 105  
  
**CABINET GOVERNMENT, 133, 135, 136, 226**  
 Caliphate, the, 70  
 Calvin and Calvinism, 170, 171  
 Canada, 151, 177, 181-3  
 Cape Colony, 93, 119, 185  
  
 Capitalism, 78, 245  
 Caste-system, the, 67  
 Catholic constitutional theories, 49, 101  
 Catholic Revival, the, 96  
 Ceylon, 119  
 Charlemagne, 42  
 Charles I (England), 113ff, 120  
 Charles II (England), 116, 126, 127  
 Charles V (Emperor), 78, 90, 96  
 Charles VIII (France), 75  
 Chartism, 210  
 Chemical Industries, 244  
 Chinese Civilization, 63-6  
 Chivalry, 45  
 Christianity, 33, 39, 40  
 Church, the, in Middle Ages, 42, 45-50  
 City State, the Greek, 26  
 Civilization defined, 13, criterion of, 153  
 Cleisthenes, constitution of, 27  
 Clive, Robert, 139  
 Coeur, Jacques, 79  
 Colbert, 124  
 Collective security, 266  
 Colonial policy, English, 128, 153  
 Colonization, European, 92-4, 118-21, 137-40,  
   174-94, 239-42  
 Colonization, Greek, 27  
 Combination Acts, 207  
 Commercial rivalry of nations, 238  
 Common Law in England, 56  
 Commons, House of, its rise, 54  
 Concert of Europe, the, 195, 238  
 Conciliar Movement, the, 74  
 Confucius, 65  
 Congo, the, 240  
 Constantinople, 72, 82  
 Co-operation in England, 210, in Denmark,  
   252  
 Copernicus, 83  
 Cortes, Spanish, 98  
 Council of Trent, 96  
 Crimean War, 213  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 116  
 Czechs, the, 198, 221  
 Czechoslovakia, 280  
  
**DANTE, 82**  
 Declaration of Independence, 163  
 Delbruck, Prof., 223  
 Democracy—in Athens, 27ff; Rousseau on d.,  
   157; influence of French Revolution, 170,  
   in 1848, 202, qualities needed by, 219,  
   231-4, difficulties of, 1880-1914, 242;  
   settling principle after Great War, 257  
 Denmark, 89, 110, 214, 250-3  
 Descartes, 109  
 Despotism, early, 20, in Europe, 95, 98, at  
   its apogee, 122ff; in colonies, 118, 120,  
   benevolent d., 160  
 Dictatorship, cp with democracy, 232;  
   Napoleon I, 171-2; Napoleon III, 203;  
   of proletariat, 269ff; of Mussolini 273, of  
   Hitler, 275ff.  
 Diderot, 156

## INDEX

- Dissenters, English, 117, 127, 207  
 Divine Right of Kings, 112  
 Division of Powers, Montesquieu's views on, 156, in America, 164  
 Dominion Status, 182, 249  
*Droit administratif*, 226  
 Durham, Lord, Report on Canada, 182  
 Dutch, the, 99, 103, 127, colonies, 119, 174 (See also HOLLAND, NETHERLANDS)
- EAST INDIA CO., BRITISH, 139, 189, Dutch, 119, French, 120, 139  
 Economic change in XVIII century, 142ff in late XIX century, 242ff, crisis of 1929, 268  
 Education, 83, 150, 217, 229, 252  
 Edward I, 59  
 Egypt, 18, 21, 22  
 Electricity, 244  
 Emigration, 178, 181, 183, 184  
*Encyclopédie*, 156  
 England, disappearance of serfdom, 44, establishment of Parliament, 54, first nation-state, 59, colonizing methods, 120, 127; constitutional development in XVII century, 111ff, 126ff (See also BRITAIN)  
 Epicurus, 29, 83  
 Erasmus, 86  
 Estates of the Realm, 52-3, decline of, 76  
 Evangelicalism, 148  
 Explorations, the great, 77
- FASCISM IN ITALY, 273-5  
 Federalism in Greece, 32, proposed in Austria, 221, in Canada, 183, in Switzerland, 228 9, in U.S.A., 164  
 Feudalism, 42, 43, 45, 50, 51, 75  
 Folk High-Schools (Denmark), 252  
 Fortescue, Sir John, 57  
 France, nation-state, 59, wars of religion, 99ff, under Louis XIV, 122ff; influenced by Britain, 133, 137, under Napoleon I, 172, and Napoleon III, 203, Third Republic, 214, 225, in 1880-1914, 236, after Great War, 262; colonial enterprise, 120, 138, 174, 190, 240  
 Frankfurt, Parliament of, 202  
 Frederick the Great, 137  
 Freedom of thought, 27, 47, 83, 89, 216; of speech and press, 130, 207, 211, 216; of trade, 188, 217  
 French Revolution, of 1789, 116-73; of 1830, 200, of 1848, 202  
 Friars, the, 46  
 Friendly Societies, 210
- GALILEO, 85, 86  
 General Councils, 47, 74  
 Georgia, 150  
 Germany, and the Holy Roman Empire, 74, 76, and Thirty Years War, 109ff; and French Revolution, 168, 172, in 1815, 197, Revolution of 1848, 202-4, imperial system, 222-4, source of trouble, 1880-1914, 236ff, Socialism in, 247-8, colonial ambitions, 241, after Great War, 257, 260, 263, under Hitler, 275-6, and Russia, 272  
 Gilds, medieval, 78  
 Gladstone, W. E., 230  
 Glasgow, General Assembly, 115
- Gordon Riots, 149  
 Great Trek, the, 184  
 Greece, Ancient, 21, 26-31  
 Greece, Modern, 198, 200  
 Grotius, Hugo, 105  
 Grundtvig, Nicholas, 252  
 Gunpowder, 64, 75  
 Gutenberg, Johann, 80
- HABSBURG, HOUSE OF, 109  
 Hammurabi, 20  
 Hastings, Warren, 189-90  
 'Have' and 'Have-not' Powers, 287  
 Hellenistic Age, 31  
 Henry IV (France), 100  
 Henry VIII (England), 85, 90  
 Heresies, medieval, 47  
 Hinduism, 67  
 Hitler, Adolf, 275ff  
 Hobbes, Thomas, 102  
 Holland, 56, 95, 106 9, 242 (See also DUTCH, NETHERLANDS)  
 Holy Roman Empire, 45, 60, 73  
 Hospitals, foundation of, 149  
 Huguenots, the, 99ff, 101, 124  
 Humanism, 30, 47, 83  
 Humanitarianism, 147ff, 210  
 Hume, David, 159  
 Hundred Years' War, 55  
 Hungary, 198, 221-2, 257  
 Huss, John, 47, 74
- IMPEACHMENT, 55, 114, 127  
 India, civilization of, 66-9, 139, British conquest of, 189-94  
 Industrial Revolution, the, 144-7, the Second Industrial Revolution, 242-6  
 Innocent III, Pope, 46  
 Inquisition, the, 47, 98  
 International Law, 104  
 Ireland, 115, 131  
 Isis, cult of, 33  
 Islamic Civilization, 69-71 (See also MOHAMMEDANISM)  
 Italy, wars of, 75, Renaissance in, 82, Spanish domination, 98, in 1815, 197, 198, Revolutions of, 1820, 200, 1830, 201, 1848, 202, reunion of, 214, constitutional system, 224-5; colonial ambitions, 241, Fascism in, 263, 273-5
- JAMES VI AND I, 112  
 James II, 129, 130  
 Japan, 119, 240, 268-9  
 Java, 119, 174  
 Jerusalem, Assize of, 51  
 Jesuit Order, 96  
 Jesus, teaching of, 38-9  
 Jews, the, 21, 33, 37, 216, 277  
 Joan of Arc, 59  
 'Junkers', the, 223  
 Justinian, Codes of, 34, 48
- KANT, IMMANUEL, 133  
 Kepler, 85  
 Knox, John, 112  
 Koran, the, 69, 70
- Laissez-faire*, 209, 248  
 La Salle, 138

# INDEX

- Laud, Abp, 120  
 Law, primitive, 20, Roman, 34-5, English  
   Common-l, 56, L and Liberty, 35, L of  
   Nature, 35, 105  
 League of Nations, 258, 260, 262-3, 265-6  
 Lenin, 271  
 Leo X, Pope, 84  
 Liberty, defined, 13, in Greece, 26ff, in Rome,  
   34-7, gospel of, in French Revolution, 168,  
   172; growth in XIX century, 198ff, in  
   N. America, 140, in India, 192, civil and  
   religious, 133  
 Lincoln, Abraham, 180  
 Lisbon, 118  
 List, Friedrich, 218  
 Local Self-government, 57, 113  
 Locke, John, 135-6, 157  
 Long Parliament, 116  
 Louis XIV, 122ff  
 Louisiana, 174  
 Loyola, Ignatius, 96  
 Luther, Martin, 87
- MACHIAVELLI, 84, 85  
 Magyars, the, 221  
 Mandate system, the, 266-8  
 Mansfield, Lord, 151  
 Mahrattas, the, 190  
 Marlborough, Duke of, 131  
 Marsilius of Padua, 48, 49  
 Marx, Karl, 199, 247  
 Mazzari, Cardinal, 123  
 Mazzini, G., 198, 201  
 Medicis, the, 79  
 Mexico, 93, 177  
 Middle Ages, the, 41-62  
 Middle Class, the, 77, 108, 166  
 Milton, John, 117  
 Missionaries, effects of, 45, 152, 175, 187  
 'Misteries', 78  
 Mithraism, 33, 39  
 Mohammedanism, 39, 69, 70  
 Monarchy, medieval limitation of, 49  
 Montesquieu, 136, 156  
 Munro, Sir T., 192  
 Mussolini, B., 225, 273-4  
 Mutiny Act, the, 130  
 Mutiny, Indian, 192
- NANTES, EDICT OF, 100; revoked, 124  
 Napoleon I, 171, 195  
 Napoleon III, 203, 214  
 Natal, 186  
 Nationality, meaning of, 58  
 Nationalism, 61, 198, 218, 235  
 Nation-states, 59, 60, 61, 74  
 Navy, the British, 131  
 Nazis, in Germany, 275ff.  
 Netherlands, 97, 107 (*See DUTCH, HOLLAND*)  
 New England, 120  
 New Learning, the, 82  
 New Netherlands, 127  
 Newton, Isaac, 243  
 New York, 127  
 New Zealand, 184, 249  
 Non-intervention, doctrine of, 196  
 Norway and Sweden, 197  
 Nova Scotia, 120  
 Novel, the, social influence of, 149
- ORANGE FREE STATE, 184  
 Orange, Princes of, 107  
 Oregon Treaty, 177  
 Ottawa Conference, 267
- PAPACY, THE, 45, 46, 60, 74  
 Parliament, the English, 54, 55, 118ff, long p  
   115, Restoration p, 126ff, reformed 208,  
   209, 230  
 Parliamentary system generally adop'ed,  
   215, in Austria, 221, in Germany, 222, in  
   Italy, 224, in France, 225ff; in Denmark,  
   250  
 Party system, the, 233ff  
 Pennsylvania, 128  
 Pericles, age of, 28  
 Petition of Right, 114  
 Philip II of Spain, 97-8, 118  
 Philosophes, the, 156  
 Physiocrats, the, 159  
 Pitt, the Elder, 139  
 Place, Francis, 207  
 Plassey, B. of, 139  
 Plato, 29  
 Poland, 60, 79, 103, 122, 196, 198, 201, 220,  
   221, 272  
 Portugal, and Portuguese Empire, 92, 93, 97,  
   118, 200  
 Poor Law, the English, 146  
 Popish Plot, the, 129  
 Press, freedom of the, 130, 216  
 Priestcraft, 21  
 Prime Minister, emergence of, 135  
 Primitive Society, 15ff  
 Printing, 64, 80, 87  
 Prison Reform, 150  
 Proletariat, dictatorship of, 269  
 Propaganda in Germany, 278  
 Prophets, the Jewish, 21  
 Protestant Reformation, the, 86-91  
 Provisions of Oxford, 52  
 Prussia, 173, 203, 204 (*See also GERMANY*)  
 Public Safety, Committee of, 171  
 Puritanism, 111, 113, 117
- QUEBEC, 120, 139
- REFERENDUM, the, 229  
 Reform Act of 1832, 208  
 Reformation, the Protestant, 86-91, 99, 112  
 Reichstag, the German, 223  
 Religious revival in England, 147ff  
 Renaissance, the, 81-86  
 Restoration, the English, 116  
 Revolution, the, of 1688, 130, era of R., 141-2  
   French, of 1789, 166-73, revolution con-  
   spiracies, 199, revolution of 1821, 200, of  
   1830, 200, of 1848, 202, effects of, 204  
 Rights of Man, Declaration of, 169  
 Roman Catholicism, 96, 129  
 Roman Law, 34 6, 48, 56  
 Rome, 21, 22, contribution to civilization,  
   31-7  
 Rousseau, 132, 149, 157  
 Rule of Law, 31, 216  
 Rumania, 215  
 Russia, 173, 191, 197, 213, 214, 220, 239; and  
   Germany, 272  
 Russian Revolution, the, 256, 269-72

# INDEX

- ST BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY**, 101  
**St Pierre, Abbé de**, 132  
**Sanctions, League of Nations**, 274  
**Schism, the Great**, 74  
**Science**, 85, 242-5  
**Scotland**, 58, 91, 115, 131, 132  
**Serbia**, 215, 254  
**Serfdom**, 42ff  
**Shire Courts**, 54  
**Sicilian expedition**, 28  
**Sikhs, the**, 191  
**Slavery, ancient**, 23, 24, 36, 12-4, Negro, 164, 179-80  
**Slave-trade, the**, 151-2  
**Smith, Adam**, 160  
**Social classes, new**, 146  
**Socialism**, 198, 247  
**Social reform**, 248-9  
**Socrates**, 29  
**Sonderbund, the**, 202  
**South Africa**, 174, 184-6  
**Sovereignty, doctrine of**, 102ff, 107, 265  
**Spain**, 53, 59, 96-7, 110, 131, 172, 200, 275  
**Spanish Empire, the**, 93, 118, 175  
**Spinoza**, 109  
**Stalin, Joseph**, 271  
**Stamp Act, the**, 162  
**States-General (France)**, 53, 123, 167 (Netherlands), 107  
**Status and Contract**, 44  
**Statuto, the (Italy)**, 203, 214  
**Stoicism**, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35  
**Succession States, the**, 261  
**Sully, Duc de**, 105  
**Sumer**, 18  
**Sunday Schools**, 150  
**Sweden**, 89, 110, 122  
**Switzerland**, 58, 60, 201, 228 9  
  
**THIRTY YEARS WAR**, 109  
**Toleration, religious**, 130, 216  
**Tories, the**, 129, 132, 134, 207  
**Totalitarianism, primitive**, 16; modern, 269ff.  
  
**Trade Unions**, 210, 217  
**Transvaal**, 184, 185, 186  
**Trent, Council of**, 91, 96  
**Triple Alliance, the**, 237  
**Triple Entente, the**, 237  
**Trusteeship in colonies**, 187  
**Tudors, the**, 55  
**Furgot**, 175  
**Turks, the**, 70, 214  
  
**UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS**, 181  
**United Provinces**, 107, 110, 131 (*See also* HOLLAND and NETHERLANDS)  
**United States, the**, 103, 161-6, 176-80, 255, 262  
  
**VASALIUS**, 85  
**Vasco da Gama**, 93  
**Versailles settlement, the**, 256ff  
**Vienna, settlement of**, 195  
**Virgil**, 81  
**Voltaire**, 132, 136, 149, 155  
  
**WAR, THE, OF 1914-18**, 254  
**Wars of religion**, 95ff  
**Wealth of Nations**, 163  
**Wellesley, Marquess**, 190  
**Wesleys, the**, 148  
**West Indies, the**, 121, 139  
**Whigs, the**, 129, 135, 208  
**William the Silent**, 99  
**William III (of Orange)**, 128-30, 134  
**Wilson, President**, 255  
**World Economic Conference**, 268  
**World-Powers, emergence of**, 239  
**Wycliffe, John**, 47, 74  
  
**ZEMSTVA, RUSSIAN**, 220  
**Zeno**, 29, 30, 31  
**Zollverein, German**, 217  
**Zulus, the**, 185  
**Zwingli, reformer**, 88